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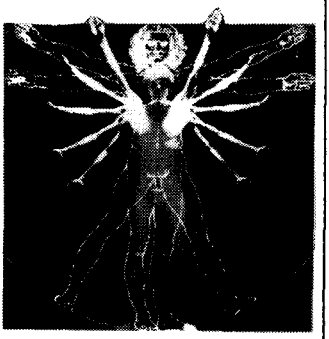

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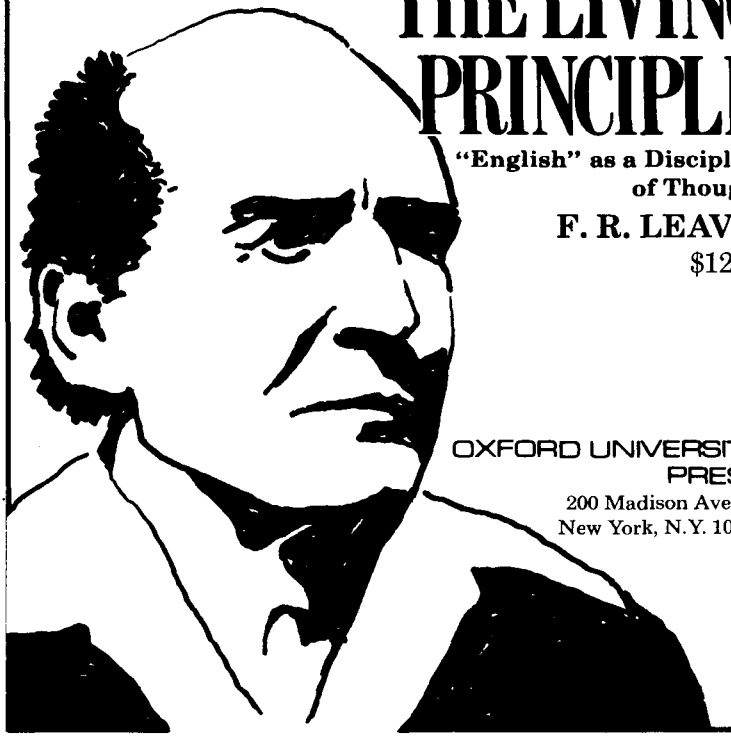

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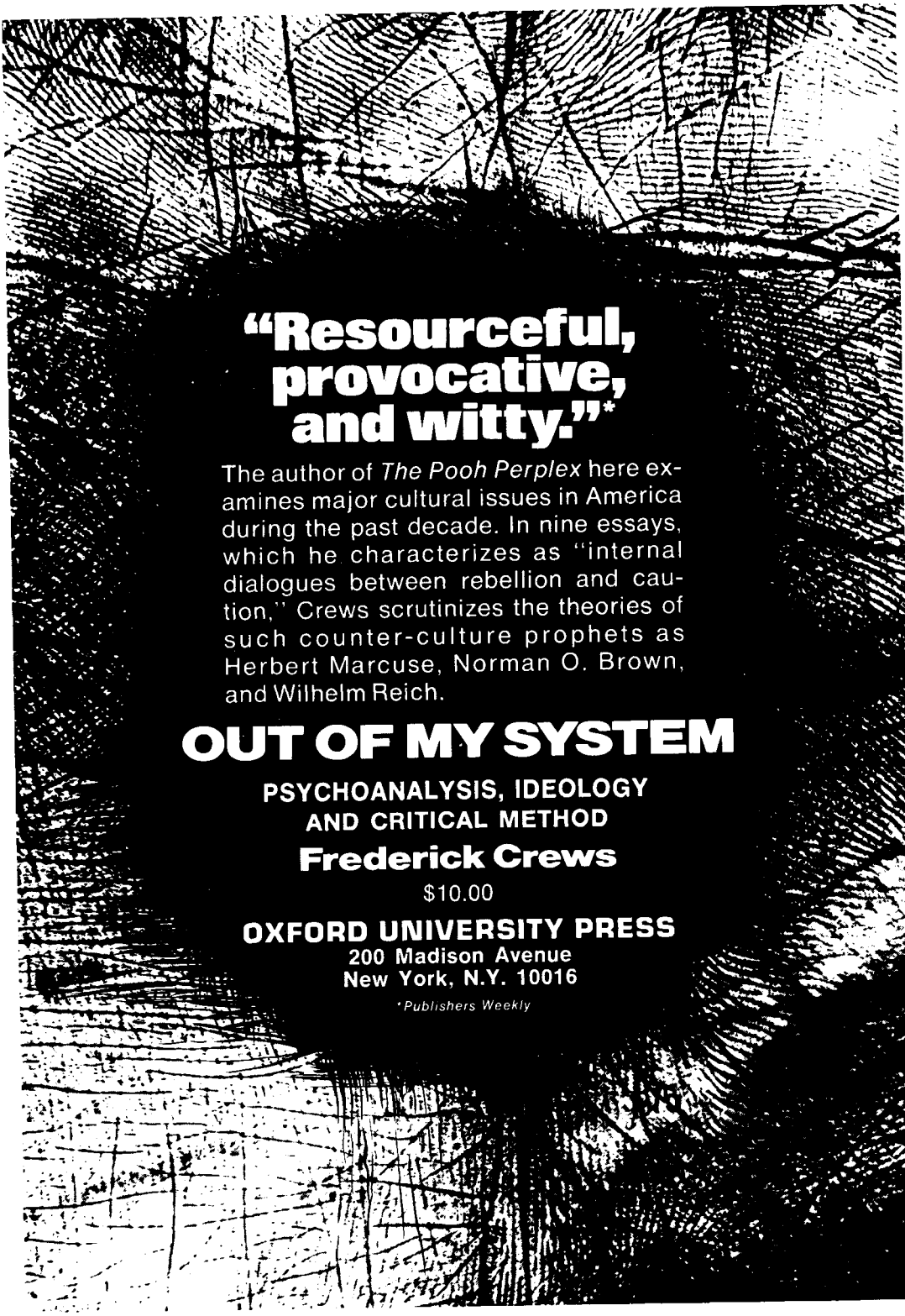
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NOTES

HANS MORGENTHAU is currently teaching at The New School for Social Research. . . . **STEVEN MARCUS** teaches English at Columbia. The new edition of Freud's **Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality**, for which Mr. Marcus has written the introduction, will be published by Basic Books this winter. . . . Three poems from **GILBERT SORRENTINO**'s book, **The Perfect Fiction**, were set to music by the British composer, Bernard Rands, and performed at the Como Festival in Italy in October. . . . **HERBERT FERBER**'s latest show was at the André Emmerich Gallery. . . . The distinguished painter and sculptor, **GEORGE L. K. MORRIS**, was a member of our Advisory Board until his sudden death last summer. . . . A writer of art criticism and history, essays and poetry, **ELEANOR MUNRO**'s latest book **Through the Vermilion Gates**, is about China. . . . **JULES OLITSKI** is a painter and a sculptor. . . . **BARBARA ROSE** is making a documentary film on the life and art of Mark di Suvero. . . . **Art On The Edge**, published this fall, is **HAROLD ROSENBERG**'s latest book. . . . Professor of Fine Arts at New York University, **ROBERT ROSENBLUM** was one of the organizers of the recent exhibition "French Painting, 1774-1830: The Age of Revolution," at the Metropolitan Museum. He is the author of **Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition: Friedrich to Rothko. . . . JACK TWORKOV** currently shows with the Nancy Hoffman Gallery. . . . "Nonsense and Happiness" is the title poem of **PETER HANDKE**'s newest collection of poems, which Urizen books will publish here in the fall of 1976. Urizen Books is a new publishing house, just founded by **MICHAEL ROLOFF** who has translated much of Handke's work into English, including the poem that appears in this issue. . . . **PREMYSL DVORAK** is the pen name of a Czech intellectual who was prominent in the reform movement of 1968 and is today jobless. . . . **MICHAEL DAVID** is a freelance journalist living in Britain. . . . Professor of History and Systems of Thought at the College de France, **MICHEL FOUCAULT** is the author of **The Order of Things** and **The Archeology of Knowledge. . . . JAMES VENIT** teaches English at Queens College. . . . The author of **Night Watch**, a novel, and a book on Andy Warhol and his films, **Stargazer, STEPHEN KOCH** is currently at work on a new novel. . . . **MARCUS RASKIN** is the author of the forthcoming **The New Democracy**. . . . Associate Professor at Hunter College and Associate Editor of **Artforum, ROSALIND KRAUSS**'s newest book, **Passages: Essays in the History of Modern Sculpture**, will be published next year. . . . **LESZEK KOLAKOWSKI** is currently teaching philosophy at Yale.

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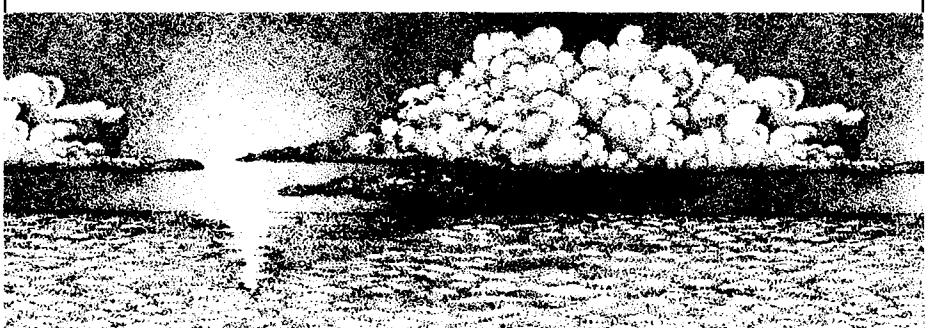

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POINTS AFTER . . .

THEORY AND PRACTICE. Hans Morgenthau's piece in this issue, the first of a series on the nature of the crisis in America and Europe, seems to us especially interesting because it does not start with any grandiose preconceptions.

The trouble with most thinking about larger social questions is that it is caught in the pull toward two extremes: having no theory and having too much theory. Thus Americans, for obvious cultural reasons, tend to steer clear of theoretical analyses of the current crisis and to confine themselves to pragmatic and piecemeal approaches. On the other hand, Europeans—and Americans with European habits of thought—tend to overtheorize, usually drawing on some version of Marxism, to come up with sweeping explanations of the situation. Hence the crisis is seen by ideologists largely as a crisis of capitalist or industrial society, and though few thinkers outside the Communist party approach the problem in conventional Marxist-Leninist terms, still most Europeans on the left appear to believe that Western society is doomed not only because it cannot solve its own contradictions but also because it cannot cope with the pressures either of the poor countries or the rich Arab ones. European non-Communist radicals also seem to take for granted that socialism is the way out. But so far as I know no one has come to grips with the question of Russian Communism, other than to have faith that the parties that claim to represent the new order, like the Italian Communists, and which are tied either tightly or loosely to Moscow will break those ties. On the other hand it is not clear whether most socialists can be counted on for anything beyond a more decent form of existing society—however desirable that might be.

In America there are some self-styled Marxist academics, whose Marxism is reserved for the higher speculation, with no consequences for practical politics and with no personal commitments. Absurd as it may seem, the only real Marxists in America are the conservatives, who seem to be trying constantly to prove that Marx was right. This administration, particularly, in

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its benign policy toward business and its squeezing not only of the poor but also of the middle class appears to be out to demonstrate the Marxist-Leninist view of capitalism. And even the effort of the liberal, Democratic politicians to solve the crisis in New York City by freezing wages and services while making no effort to control profits or wages must be construed as a Marxist lesson in politics and economics. Fortunately for American conservatism, there is no disaffected working class in this country to learn this lesson, nor any radical party to exploit it.

FREUD IN THE SEVENTIES. Frederick Crews' recent review of Erikson in the *New York Review* is a dramatic illustration of a major shift of opinion in the last few decades. Crews' takedown of Erikson was quite masterly, but more significant was his use of the occasion to indicate his turn away from Freud. For Crews has been one of the staunchest as well as one of the most flexible interpreters of psychoanalytic theory, particularly in relation to literature. His apostasy must be seen, therefore, as a sign of the almost complete decline of support for analysis by the intellectual community.

Now, after the heyday of analysis in the fifties, when psychoanalysis took its turn in being popularized and vulgarized by the mass media, even the most self-satisfied analysts admit that never since the beginnings in Vienna has the profession been held in lower esteem, and that, indeed, it may be dying, at least in its most orthodox forms.

The reasons for the decline of psychoanalysis are mixed. For one thing, no movement or current of opinion lasts long these days, when the very idea of change and novelty, originally spread by the needs of the popular media, becomes an intellectual ideal. In addition, a captious and sensation-seeking public has found analysis too long, too dreary, too threatening, too expensive. All the new faddish and groupie encounters fit better into the current zest for experience by adding some social and sexual spice to the notion of therapy. And, of course, they are cheaper and faster. If we ask what they are faster in achieving, then the subject becomes vaguer; but the question of "cure" is not really a pertinent one for those adventurers masked as patients, who have no clear reason for hopping from one kind of treatment to another, nor any clear expectation of psychological benefits beyond a sense of pleasure and excitement in the name of therapy.

But the analysts, themselves, have also been accomplices in the declining respect for analysis, at least for its theoretical side. With the passing of the older, more sophisticated figures, the public face of the profession has been presented by the younger analysts, most of whom either have no theoretical interests, or are quite primitive and amateurish in their thinking. In addition, their arrogance and dogmatism combined with an ignorance of other areas of knowledge tend to alienate those who were originally attracted to the extra-

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ordinary power and suggestiveness of Freud's own thinking. Nor is any kind of intellectual exchange promoted by the patronizing manner of many analysts, which seems, for some of them, to be a carryover of their feeling of superiority to their patients in the analytic session. In social situations, for example, many analysts act as though the world were divided into analysts and patients; hence they tend to see others as symptoms rather than people. And I suspect that these nouveau analysts must be as much of an embarrassment to the more sophisticated ones as they are to those laymen like myself who have been defending Freud against his detractors.

Perhaps in the mélange of opinions that goes by the name of thinking today, it is impossible to return to ideas that people want to think are passé. No doubt, Freud, like any other thinker of the past, needs to be related to more recent developments—which is, in part, something which the Freudians, themselves, should be doing. But the assault on Freud by the feminists and by radicals who think they have refuted Freud by repeating clichés about social and environmental factors may be so destructive to the very idea of analysis that we may no longer be able to salvage even those ideas of Freud's that are not bound to his culture and his era. The French, always up on the latest intellectual fashions, have made an effort to bring Freud into the mainstream of modern thought, but all they have succeeded in doing is to bring Freud into the mainstream of French rhetoric. Thus a structuralist like Lacan, whom I confess I can't really understand, has updated Freud, so far as I can make out, by translating him into structuralist language, and a Communist like Althusser has translated Freud into a mishmash of Marxist and structuralist jargon. On the other hand, seemingly new and broader ideas advanced in this country have frequently been gimmicky and watered-down adaptations of old ones. The notion of identity crisis, for example, is just a simplification of a process described in greater complexity by Freud. And the concept of psychohistory strikes me as an attempt to create a new field by joining two old ones with a hyphen.

What we need, I think, is just the opposite. A good deal of the kind of confusion spread by the theorizing zeal of the French could be avoided by separating the clinical aspects of psychoanalysis from the theoretical ones, at least keeping its therapeutic side clear of the jumble of both friendly and hostile interpretations. And the air would be cleared if a moratorium were declared on all efforts to marry psychoanalysis to other theories, like Marxism or existentialism, which have produced only verbal alliances which turn out to be mismatches. Perhaps, at a time when lofty syntheses are bound to be suspect, one can only indicate that psychoanalysis is not incompatible with other beliefs, as Juliet Mitchell has attempted painstakingly, or to bring to its understanding some of the sophisticated modes of thinking developed mostly in literary and cultural criticism, as in Lionel Trilling's and Frederick Crews' earlier writing and in some recent essays by Steven Marcus.

W.P.

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Hans Morgenthau

THE DECLINE OF THE WEST

EDITORS' NOTE: *Mr. Morgenthau's piece is the first in a series of comments on the political and economic crisis in America and Western Europe. We've asked a number of people in various fields to participate in the series, and their contributions will appear in subsequent issues.*

Present concern with the decline of the West is caused by the obvious decline of American power. The defeat the United States has suffered in Indochina has not only been total but ignominious. Even if defeat had to be anticipated as inevitable, there was nothing inevitable about our inability to manipulate the modalities of defeat for the purpose of retreating from an untenable position with at least a modicum of poise. American power and influence used to be dominant in Turkey and Greece. The United States has succeeded in alienating both to the point where their effective membership in NATO is in question, and has failed in inducing them to compose their differences over Cyprus. We are reduced to watching passively the anarchy, threatening Communization, of our ally Portugal. We are unable to dissuade the Federal Republic of Germany, one of our closest allies, from selling a whole nuclear production cycle to Brazil, a transaction that, making the proliferation of nuclear weapons virtually inevitable, carries ominous implications for the survival of mankind.

The natural current concern with this decline of American power has obscured the relationship between that decline and the decline of the West in general. More particularly, it has obscured the fact that the United States owes its rise to predominance in the aftermath of the Second World War to the selfsame decline of the West, of which it now appears as the prime example. In other words, the decline of the West,

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the United States included, was preceded by the decline of the traditional nation-states of Western Europe, of which the United States was the main beneficiary.

The first spectacular demonstration of that shift was the decisive intervention of the United States in the First World War, temporarily obscured by the American isolationism of the inter-war period and the French military predominance in Europe during the twenties. The United States emerged from the First World War as the potentially most powerful nation on earth; but from the collapse of Wilson's foreign policy to the outbreak of the Second World War it acted as though it still were a power of the second rank. It was neither design nor choice but the ineluctable force of its circumstances that in the aftermath of the Second World War made the United States the most powerful nation on earth. On the one hand, the traditional great powers of Europe, having suffered the death of 7 million of their most vigorous men in the First World War, became in the Second the victims of occupation, mass bombings, and genocide. Within a decade after the end of the hostilities, they had lost the bulk of their colonial possessions either voluntarily or in consequence of defeat in colonial wars.

On the other hand, the outcome of the Second World War was decided by nations either completely or largely outside Europe. The material productivity and technical ingenuity of the United States, undamaged—in contrast to all the other productive systems—but greatly stimulated by the war, was a decisive factor in victory and reconstruction. Thus, the conjunction of the absolute decline of the traditional nation-states of the West and the absolute ascendancy of the United States—both in consequence of two world wars—accounts for the rise of the United States in the context of the West's decline.

A similar shift from the traditional nation-states of the West to the United States can be observed on the moral plane. The First World War brought to the fore two challenges to the traditional moral order: Communism and Fascism. Faced with the choice, the ruling elites chose Fascism as protection against Communism or even radical reform. They chose Fascism even if it meant opening the gates to the enemy of the nation. "Rather Hitler than Blum" became the slogan of the French right, and the Vichy regime became the political manifestation of that moral preference.

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The victory over Fascism in the Second World War by no means resolved this moral crisis but posed it in a new form. While it eliminated Fascism as a serious political force and discredited it morally, it established the claim of Communism as a legitimate political force both at home and abroad. During the Second World War, the Communists were in the forefront of the fight for national liberation from the national enemy. Close to one-third of the Italian electorate has consistently voted for Communist or pro-Communist parties; in France the corresponding figure is close to one-quarter. Yet the ruling elites of Italy and France have consistently treated the Communist parties as being unqualified to participate in the government. The consequence has been a distortion of the democratic processes through legal and political practices which have succeeded in excluding permanently a large segment of the electorate from active participation in the government.

The United States has been spared this moral dilemma of having to violate a basic principle of democracy for the sake of protecting the democratic processes. The United States has never had to choose between Fascism and Communism, for both threats to American democracy were always remote, however much the aberration of McCarthyism made it temporarily appear that Communism was the main issue America had to fight at home and abroad. Thus, while the nations of Western Europe risked national disintegration in the struggle to the finish between democracy and the two totalitarianisms, America was able to present a united national front against the two enemies from without: first against the totalitarianism of Fascism, then against that of Communism. The simplistic moral stance of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, dividing the world into good and evil nations and the morally tainted neutral ones, expresses on the moral plane the simple political and military confrontation of the Cold War. Thus the United States became the "leader of the free world," both by dint of the actual distribution of political power and of the simple moral position it could afford to take vis-à-vis the enemies of the "free world." That ascendancy of the United States to unchallenged and seemingly unchallengeable leadership, not only in the "free world" but in the world at large, effectively concealed the actual decline of the collectivity called the Western world and the trends toward deterioration within the United States itself.

What sapped the moral strength of the United States was not the

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contradiction between national interest and class interest as it did in Europe, but, on the one hand, the reduction of complex political issues to a simple moral juxtaposition with Communism and, on the other, the spectacular demonstrations of moral obtuseness at home and abroad. What confronted the nations of Western Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War both as a threat and a challenge was the military presence of the Red Army 100 kilometers east of the Rhine, the political presence of large Communist parties within their borders, and political, economic, and social structures and policies creating and maintaining the cleavages on which Communism thrives.

American simplistic anti-Communism was adequate to counter through containment the Soviet military threat. But, the counter-subversive programs America operated in the democratic countries of the West remained not only by and large ineffective but turned out to be counterproductive. What was difficult for the counter-subversive technicians of the American secret services to understand was that the hold which Communism has over large masses of the Western peoples is not primarily, let alone exclusively, the result of the machinations of Communist governments from abroad, but of indigenous conditions exploited but not created from abroad. Thus, the rigid ideological commitment to a dogmatic anti-Communism, reducing a complex reality to a simple juxtaposition between good and evil, has been demonstrated to be untenable on philosophical and historical grounds and proven to be a political and moral disaster.

Committed in a largely revolutionary or prerevolutionary world to a precarious if not doomed status quo, the United States was forced by the very logic of the commitment to support or create the kind of government whose antagonistic rhetoric left nothing to be desired and who was willing to fight Communism by all means fair or foul. Thus, the United States found itself supported by, and supporting, governments throughout the world whose political philosophy and practice were completely at odds with what goes by the name of American principles of government. The protection of the "free world" from Communism became the main purpose of American foreign policy. In its name, or its alias, national security policies were pursued and outrages committed which could not pass muster before the moral standards by which the theory and practice of the government had been traditionally judged.

American moral and political commitment to anti-Communism

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succeeded only where the military and economic power of the United States could be effectively brought into play. It failed when its pure moral force was appealed to. Paradoxically, it failed not because the peoples whose freedom was at stake were not willing to listen to its message, but because America, the bearer of the message, did not know how to live up to it. The fear of Communism blocked the road to freedom. In the contest between the colonial powers of Europe and their colonies, the United States took the side of the former, not because it was in favor of colonialism, but because it was afraid that Communism might be the alternative to colonialism. The champion of freedom became the defender and restorer of the colonial status quo. Making common cause with the colonial powers, it shared with them the moral taint of colonialism. Thus America came to lose the peculiar moral aura which it thought had set it apart from all other nations.

Yet, while America's indiscriminate dogmatic opposition to Communism, or to what looked like Communism, compelled it to join the forces of the status quo, its libertarianism and anti-colonialist tradition evoked its sympathies with the aspirations of the Third World. That world had painted a picture of its condition flattering to itself and disparaging to their former colonial masters and the industrial nations at large. Their miseries and failures are presented as the responsibility of the developed nations, who have the moral obligation to right the wrong they have done them. This moral dichotomy between the "good" members of the Third World and the "evil" colonial exploiters cut across the American dichotomy between "good" democratic capitalists and "evil" Communists. For many of the nations of the "free world" are sympathetic to one or the other brands of Communism, or at least to some brand of authoritarianism which bears the name of "Communism" or "Socialism."

Thus, what occurred on the moral plane was the opposite of what took place in the arena of power. In the latter, the United States benefited at the expense of its associates. On the former, it partook in the disrepute of its associates. Perhaps not surprisingly—considering the resentment that unchallengeable power evokes—the unprecedented power of the United States has not been matched by the reputation for the benevolent use of that power. That discrepancy produced the undoing of America's moral position. The Third World

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attacked the United States with the same arguments which America used to argue against colonialism, racism, and exploitation, perpetuated by its friends. Arguing within its traditional moral framework, the United States had no answer when its own arguments were turned against it. It had at least spoken as the champion of the downtrodden and the exploited in the name of equality and freedom, and now defended in its deeds the status quo of colonialism and exploitation in the name of anti-Communism. Foreign aid, parsimoniously and ineffectually dispersed, is a token tribute to the professed ideals of America.

This moral disarmament by an adversary invoking the other side's moral arguments for his own purposes was used brilliantly by Hitler in the Czechoslovakian crisis of 1938. Hitler invoked the principle of national self-determination for the purpose of destroying Czechoslovakia. Yet the Western allies, having invoked the very same principles on behalf of all oppressed nationalities, had no moral argument to counter Hitler. As the London *Times* put it in its comment on the Munich settlement:

> Self-determination, the professed principle of the Treaty of Versailles, has been invoked by Herr Hitler against its written text, and his appeal has been allowed.

The United States, threatened materially and weakened morally by its association with the traditional nation-states of the West, finds itself in the end weakened by the very magnitude of its material power. It is one of the paradoxes of the nuclear age that, in contrast to the experiences of all pre-nuclear history, an increase in military power is no longer necessarily conducive to an increase in political power. The threat of all-out nuclear violence implies the threat of total destruction. As such, it can still be a suitable instrument of foreign policy when addressed to a nation which cannot reply in kind. The nation armed with nuclear weapons can assert power over the other nation by saying: Either you do as I say, or I will destroy you. The situation is different if the nation so threatened can respond by saying: If you destroy me with nuclear weapons you will be destroyed in turn. Since the nuclear destruction of one nation would call forth the nuclear destruction of the other, both nations can afford to disregard the threat

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on the assumption that both will act rationally.

Thus, the unprecedented power which modern technology has put into the hands of Western nations is useful only under extraordinary limiting conditions. Under most possible and actual circumstances, that power is an empty threat and is being disregarded by nations much inferior in material power. Thus the power that really counts, a few extreme exceptions to the contrary notwithstanding, is conventional power, and here the gap between the United States and the other Western nations, on the one hand, and the non-Western nations, on the other hand, is of course by no means as wide as it is if one puts nuclear power into the scales. Consequently, when one compares the conventional power of the West with the conventional power of the non-Western world, one notices that the nations of the West are much less powerful than they appear to be. That impression is strengthened when one examines the moral principles on behalf of which the Western nations may be willing to use conventional power and with a chance for success. The defeat of the United States in Indochina illustrates vividly the decline of Western power—material and moral.

It is one of the great ironies of contemporary history that the moral and material decline of the West has in good measure been accomplished through the moral and material triumphs of the West. The Third World has shaken off the Western yoke by invoking the very moral principles of self-determination and social justice which the West has proclaimed and endeavored to put into practice. That, in the process, national self-determination was to become the ideology of new imperialisms and social justice the ideological disguise of servitudes new and old was to be expected. What points to the moral exhaustion of the West is its inability to stipulate moral principles with which to justify its positions and interests against its enemies and detractors.

This moral helplessness whenever the West had to contend with the use of its moral principles on behalf of its enemies—dramatically revealed in the Czechoslovakian crisis of 1938—has been one of the main sources of its weakness in action. It is simple and convenient to identify this weakness with one particular man acting in a particular episode and thus isolate the "spirit of Munich" from the Western moral stance in foreign policy. It is equally simple and convenient to decry any kind of

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accommodation and compromise in foreign policy as "appeasement," relying instead upon the uncompromising containment of the enemy. Lacking credible moral standards that could guide his action, the actor is reduced to either denying the moral issue altogether or universalizing it to the point of irrelevance.

On the material plane the West has been made vulnerable to oil as a political weapon by its high technological development. The power which oil bestows upon oil-producing nations is the result of the technological development of modern industrial nations. Twenty or fifty years ago, oil did not bestow such power upon oil-producing nations because the use of oil as the lifeblood of modern industry was limited. The oil-consuming nations still operated in a buyer's market. If one source of oil was not available or was available only on conditions which were unacceptable to the consuming nation, that nation could go elsewhere and buy it there on more convenient terms. The contemporary situation is characterized by an imbalance between supply and demand to such an extent that the buyer's market has been transformed into a seller's market and nations which have large deposits of oil, cooperating as the oil-producing nations did during the fall of 1973, can apply a stranglehold to the consuming nations; or they can impose political conditions which the consuming nations can refuse to meet only at the risk of enormous political, economic, and social dislocations.

Thus, the vulnerability of highly developed industrial nations of the West to the supply of oil is a function of their industrial advancement. The shift of power from the oil-consuming to the oil-producing nations is a by-product of the former's industrial power. Industrial development has widened the gap between the advanced and backward nations in favor of the former, but it has supplied some of the latter with a new weapon: a quasi-monopoly of oil.

That weapon can be deadly, but it resembles nuclear power in that it is purely destructive. An oil-producing nation can bring an oil-consuming one to its knees, but it cannot govern it by virtue of its oil monopoly. Thus the potency of the oil weapon demonstrates dramatically the decline of Western power. Yet it indicates no substitute for that declining power—except the power of destruction.

The moral and material decline of the West is an observable fact. What is not observable is the kind of order that could take the place of

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the fading one created and maintained by the power of the West. Instead of the outlines of a new order created and supported by a new center of power, what appears on the horizon of the civilized world is the specter of anarchy, with legal arrangements, institutions, and procedures being utterly out of tune with the objective technological conditions of the age.

We are saddened by the death of our friend

Lionel Trilling

whose work appeared for many years in this magazine and whose influence will continue to be felt.

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Steven Marcus

FREUD'S THREE ESSAYS ON THE THEORY OF SEXUALITY

In 1905, Freud published a small paper-covered book, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. Today it is by common consent regarded, along with *The Interpretation of Dreams*, as Freud's most fundamental and original work.

Freud himself was aware of its importance, and one of his ways of registering that awareness was by returning to this text repeatedly during the next twenty years in order to revise, correct, amend, alter, clarify, and add to its substance. As a result, the text of the *Three Essays* is something of a palimpsest. Moreover, it is a peculiar kind of palimpsest. Not only is the visible surface or layer of writing difficult, sometimes obscure, and frequently problematical, but as we, so to say, peel away the surface and retrieve the hidden earlier layers, versions, or formulations, the difficulty, obscurity, and problematicality tend to deepen. Indeed if one consults the first German edition of 1905 or the first English translation made by A.A. Brill in 1910 from the second German edition, it is difficult to know what an original generation of readers could have made out of the formidable darknesses that involve so many parts of this work.

From the outset, one of the overt aims of this work was to declare the end of a historical innocence. In its disclosure to the world of the universality and normality of infantile and childhood sexuality in all its polymorphously perverse impulsiveness, the *Three Essays* was bringing to a close that epoch of cultural innocence in which infancy and childhood were regarded as themselves innocent, as special preserves of our

NOTE: This is an abbreviated version of an introduction to a new edition of the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, to be published next spring.

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lives untouched by desires, strivings after selfish pleasure, twinges of demonic perversity, drives toward carnal satisfactions. Some considerable measure of the odium that attached for years to Freud's name has to be understood in this light. He undertook to deprive Western culture of one of its sanctified myths. Cultures do not as a rule take kindly to such demythologizings, and it should come as no surprise that of all of Freud's findings those that have to do with infantile and childhood sexuality were resisted with the most persistency.

If we turn to the form of the *Three Essays*, the evidence of Freud's complex intentions is immediately in view. Each of the essays is divided into a number of sections, each of which is given a title. These sections are in turn further divided into smaller subsections, to each of which another substantive heading is also attached. The work as a whole is composed out of these small juxtaposed blocks of material. If the *Three Essays* resemble a palimpsest in the dimension of historical time, then they resemble a mosaic in either the dimension of printed space or in the dimension of the experiential time that any single reading of them requires. In contrast to the grand expository sweep that we usually associate with Freud's writing, the discourse of the *Three Essays* is made up of these fragments which are both connected and easy to separate, manipulate, revise, or delete. They function as moveable parts of a system, and Freud's complex intentionality in this text includes the explicit intention of being systematic, of setting forth a coherent, systematic theory. Freud is explicitly conscious of the circumstance that he is on this occasion setting forth a theory that as a *psychology* has to stand up in point of comprehensiveness, depth, systematic integrity, and heuristic value to the demands of what a theory should be.

A second question of form has to do with the large structure of these essays. Why, it may be asked, did Freud begin the way he does? Why did he start out with an essay on "The Sexual Aberrations" and move on from these to essays on "Infantile Sexuality" and "The Transformations of Puberty"? His strategy in this context is not difficult to understand. In starting out with the sexual aberrations he was seeking to deal in the first place with certain forms of adult sexual behavior; in addition, the sexual practices in question were familiar and recognizable to whatever limited audience he might in 1905 think he was addressing. Such behaviors were, moreover, aggregated

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wholes, and Freud's procedure in the opening essay is to take these aggregated phenomena and arrange them in such a way that they can be disaggregated and decomposed. A further pertinence of this device of working backwards begins to be revealed when we see Freud regarding these adult manifestations of sexual behavior as being, on one level, integrated forms of sexual activity and, at the same time, on another level, failures of integration, developmental outcomes in which the various component drives of the sexual instinct have not been put together in a fully integrated way. In addition to the relative familiarity of this material, however, a further strategic consideration vis-à-vis his audience may have been guiding him. The explosive material of this book is to be found in the second essay; it would have been imprudent, in the most elementary sense, to begin straightaway with that material. A groundwork in the familiar and paradoxically less inflammatory subject of the sexual aberrations had first to be put down before Freud could proceed to the unsettling question of infantile sexuality.

In this connection, it may be useful to note that in the *Three Essays* Freud is writing with a model somewhere in his mind. That model is Darwin, and the *Three Essays* is Freud's most truly Darwinian work. It occupies the boundary that both separates and connects the biological and the psychological realms of existence, and it touches unavoidably upon the complex relations that obtain between phylogenesis and ontogenesis. It is about "origins" in more ways than one, and is written from a consistently evolutionary point of view. Like Darwin, Freud is concerned with the "variations" in form and structure that the sexual instinct takes, and he is interested in arranging or classifying these "variations" in such a way that both their resemblances and differences be rendered in full account. Thus in enumerating the various kinds of homosexual activities, Freud remarks that though there are certainly distinctions and differences among them, it is nonetheless "impossible to overlook the existence of numerous intermediate examples of every type, so that we are driven to conclude that we are dealing with a connected series." At the same time, he is concerned to discover "the general conditions under which mere variations of the sexual instinct pass over into pathological aberrations." This double interest is clearly analogous to the interest in Darwin of tracing both the relations of variations within a species to one another

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and discovering the point or points at which variations subtly pass over into new or different species. And just as the principal theme of Darwin's work was the "transmutation" of species, so the fundamental preoccupation of the *Three Essays* is with "the transformation[s] of the sexual instinct." Yet each time that he works out such a transformation, Freud hastens to remind us "that an unbroken chain bridges the gap between the neuroses in all their manifestations and normality." The distinctions between variation and species or the normal and the pathological are never simple, nor are they ever held simply. The purpose of Freud's taxonomy is not merely to create new distinctions and classifications; its purpose is to understand how all the distinctions are related to one another, and how one is created out of the transformation of another.

Freud also reminds us of Darwin in some of his larger statements and speculations. The penultimate paragraph of the section on "Deviations in Respect of the Sexual Object" reads as follows:

> The very remarkable relation which thus holds between sexual variations and the descending scale from health to insanity gives us plenty of material for thought. I am inclined to believe that it may be explained by the fact that the impulses of sexual life are among those which, even normally, are the least controlled by the higher activities of the mind. In my experience anyone who is in any way, whether socially or ethically, abnormal mentally is invariably abnormal also in his sexual life. But many people are abnormal in their sexual life who in every other respect approximate to the average, and have, along with the rest, passed through the process of human cultural development, in which sexuality remains the weak spot.

What Freud is saying in this passage, among other things, is that in human cultural evolution—which the species as a whole has undergone, and which each individual recapitulates in his own development—sexuality remains the "weak spot." That is to say, it is the part of us that is most recalcitrant to civilized constraints and does not undergo evolution smoothly. Hence individual development is precarious, and "normal" heterosexual maturity is in fact something that has to be achieved. Nothing about it is assured or inevitable; it is contingent upon almost everything else. In a similar sense, Freud regards the childhood of each person as a "primeval period, which falls within

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the lifetime of the individual himself," and he goes on to remark of infantile amnesia that it "turns everyone's childhood into something like a prehistoric epoch and conceals from him the beginnings of his own sexual life." Although Freud, like Darwin, was rigorously anti-teleological in his formal point of view, there are some moments in this text when the evidence of structure, design, and a coherent and meaningful sequence of developments seem so overwhelming that he (like Darwin again) wrote passages which can only be construed in a teleological way.

Darwin was a confirmed empiricist who was at the same time capable of pursuing a grand theoretical hypothesis with originality and ingenuity and thus introduce a successful scientific revolution. A similar, though not identical, assertion may be made about Freud. Freud parts company with Darwin at the point at which empirical evidence on the one hand, and speculation and inferential boldness of thought on the other, meet. How beforehand in his boldness Freud can be is revealed in two critical footnotes which he almost casually sets down. The first of these is the first footnote in the first essay. In its original form Freud says that the information on homosexuality and the adult perversions on which the first thirds of the essay are based is derived from the "well-known writings" of Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis, et. al. In other words, Freud went through these large volumes of medical and psychiatric case summaries and drew from them the material on which he based his analysis. What goes without saying, and what does not quite get said, is that in 1905 Freud had as yet had no direct psychoanalytic experience of either homosexual patients or adults who practised some form of perverse sexual behavior. (In a footnote situated further on in the 1905 text, he did make the admission in respect to homosexuals.) This lack of firsthand empirical evidence appears to have been in no way a deterrent to Freud's theoretical inclinations and energies. A similar circumstance occurs in the second essay on infantile sexuality. In a footnote added in 1910, Freud writes:

> When the account which I have given above of infantile sexuality was first published in 1905, it was founded for the most part on the results of psychoanalytic research upon adults. At that time it was impossible to make full use of direct observation on children; only isolated hints and some valuable pieces of confirmation came from that source.

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In their original form, therefore, the first two essays have the character of grand inferential constructions which happen somehow—almost incidentally, one might say—to coincide with or catch up a good deal of the truth. Based on experience of some kind, they are nonetheless not primarily empirical in nature but are systematic and relatively coherent reworkings of glimpses into, intuitions of, and insights about hidden truths which still remain partly hidden.

In order to gain some sense of how this work might have affected its early readers, let us reconstitute in a general way part of the argument of the text of 1905. (I will, of course, refer to later additions and revisions when it seems appropriate.) Freud begins the first essay on "The Sexual Aberrations" by making an axial distinction. He divides all sexual behavior into two categories. One has to do with the "sexual object," the person toward whom sexual activity is directed or sexual desire felt. The second has to do with the "sexual aim," the act toward which the sexual instinct inclines. Both of these categories contain numerous deviations, and Freud classifies these deviations by means of this distinction. The first class of aberrations contains those sexual activities which are deviant in respect of the sexual object. The most important and largest population in this class consists of adults whose sexual object has been "inverted." These inverts, or homosexuals as they are ordinarily called, "vary greatly in their behavior in several respects." Freud divides such behavior according to exclusiveness at one end of a scale and contingency at the other. He also notes variations that have to do with the subjective views of inverts toward their own behavior and with the date of onset and persistency of such behavior. Although the range of variation is great, the variations seem nonetheless connected, and he is forced to conclude that they form "a connected series." If there is a totality here, it is organized heterogeneously.

When he turns to contemporary explanations of this aberration, he finds that the explanations explain very little. As for the currently popular medical ascription that inversion is "an innate indication of nervous degeneracy," Freud rejects both parts of the diagnosis as inadequate in classificatory precision and explanatory value. Homosexuality occurs among too many otherwise normal and indeed gifted and highly developed people to be regarded as a sign of some kind of organic degeneration. As for the argument about whether homosexuality is innate or acquired, Freud refuses to choose exclusively be-

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tween the two opposed alternatives. He then turns to certain theories of bisexuality. He cannot accept those explanations of homosexuality that ascribe it to either somatic or psychical hermaphroditism, nor does he think that it can be traced to certain localized centers of the brain. Nevertheless, partly because of the evolutionary evidence in normal human anatomy that points toward "an originally bisexual disposition," Freud accepts the notion that this disposition "is somehow concerned in inversion, though we do not know in what that disposition exists, beyond anatomical structure." Along with this, which explains nothing, he accepts the hypothesis that in confronting inversion, "we have to deal with disturbances that affect the sexual instinct in the course of its development," which is a little better.

He turns next to the homosexuals' attitudes towards their sexual objects and demonstrates that there is no uniformity of attitude to be found. And the same variety exists in respect of sexual aim—a whole array of activities characterizes homosexual behavior, not any exclusive kind of activity. What Freud is doing here is refusing to accept homosexuality as a simple or single entity; indeed he does the opposite. He stresses its complexity and hints that it may consist of more than one entity. And he continued to place stress in this direction. In 1915, he added as part of a long footnote the following reflection:

> Psycho-analytic research is most decidedly opposed to any attempts at separating off homosexuals from the rest of mankind as a group of a special character. By studying sexual excitations other than those that are manifestly displayed, it has found that all human beings are capable of making a homosexual object-choice and have in fact made one in their unconscious . . . . Thus from the point of view of psycho-analysis the exclusive sexual interest felt by men for women is also a problem that needs elucidation and is not a self-evident fact based upon an attraction that is ultimately of a chemical nature.

In refusing to separate out homosexuals from other "normal" human beings, Freud was emphasizing the continuity and relatedness that exists between both groups—or between pathology and nonpathology, if you will. And in adding that heterosexual normality is itself problematical, unelucidated, and not self-evident, he was drawing attention to the uncertain and complex character of what we ordinarily take to be the natural human norm.

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Freud concludes this section by remarking that the present state of knowledge does not provide a position on which to base "a satisfactory explanation of the origin of inversion." Nevertheless, his investigation of the material before him has led him to discover that the connection between the sexual instinct and the sexual object is not as intimate as is commonly supposed:

> Experience of the cases that are considered abnormal has shown us that in them the sexual instinct and the sexual object are merely soldered together—a fact which we have been in danger of overlooking in consequence of the uniformity of the normal picture, where the object appears to form part and parcel of the instinct. We are thus warned to loosen the bond that exists in our thoughts between instinct and object. It seems probable that the sexual instinct is in the first instance independent of its object; nor is its origin likely to be due to its object's attraction.

In this passage of speculative flight Freud is making a number of theoretical proposals. He is suggesting that the sexual instinct is plastic and labile, that it can be displaced, that it is not entirely dependent upon its object—or the object world—and that it may indeed be at first independent and without an object. All of these suggestions will lead to momentous consequences later on. One of them is to be found in a footnote that he added in 1910:

> The most striking distinction between the erotic life of antiquity and our own no doubt lies in the fact that the ancients laid the stress upon the instinct itself, whereas we emphasize its object. The ancients glorified the instinct and were prepared on its account to honour even an inferior object; while we despise the instinctual activity itself, and find excuses for it only in the merits of the object.

Deviations in respect to the sexual aim comprise those practices that are known as "perversions." They begin for Freud with activities in which the mucous membranes of the lips and mouth are brought into contact with the genitals of another person. Such practices, Freud remarks, "have no doubt been common among mankind from primeval times." And those who condemn these acts as perversions "are giving way to an unmistakable feeling of *disgust*, which protects them from accepting sexual aims of the kind. The limits of such disgust are, however, often purely conventional." In other words, perversions are commonly known or recognized by the subjective feeling of disgust

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that their contemplation elicits; moreover, this subjective sign is, for Freud, in part a historical and conventional circumstance. It is in some measure a socially induced force, and its action leads "to a restriction of the sexual aim." Nevertheless, Freud wryly adds, "the sexual instinct in its strength enjoys overriding this disgust." The same holds true for those activities which make sexual use of the anal orifice.

The sexual instinct extends its interest to other parts of the body as well, and in those activities described as fetishism we see one such extension. These activities can extend to inanimate objects as well, such as "a piece of clothing or underlinen." What is interesting about such practices—and about all the other perversions as well—is that they are in some degree "habitually present in normal love," especially in its preliminary aims. And Freud regards them as pathological only when they take the place of the normal sexual aims and object "in *all* circumstances," when they take on the "characteristics of exclusiveness and fixation." Such characteristics apply as well to the perversions that have to do with looking and being looked at, namely voyeurism and exhibitionism. These connected symptoms occur in both active and passive forms, which leads Freud on to "the most common and the most significant of all the perversions," sadism and masochism. He finds the roots of sadism in the "element of *aggressiveness*" that is usually part of the sexuality of most male human beings. In sadism, the "aggressive component of the sexual instinct . . . has become independent and exaggerated and, by displacement, has usurped the leading position." Masochism is a more complex and mysterious phenomenon, and in 1905 Freud had to content himself with the remark that "no satisfactory explanation of this perversion has been put forward and . . . it seems possible that a number of mental impulses are combined in it to produce a single resultant."

Yet sadism and masochism have a further interest because both are "habitually found to occur together in the same individual." This copresence of opposites, Freud remarks, has "a high theoretical significance," and he proceeds to connect these opposites "with the opposing masculinity and femininity which are combined in bisexuality—a contrast which often has to be replaced in psychoanalysis by that between activity and passivity." At this point even a casual reader cannot escape the sense that a large theoretical design is beginning to take shape.

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As he moves toward a conclusion of this section, Freud notes once again that the sexual life of healthy adults is rarely without perverse constituents in it, and he repeats his admonition that when it comes to the sphere of sexuality "we are brought up against peculiar and, indeed, insoluble difficulties as soon as we try to draw a sharp line to distinguish mere variations within the range of what is physiological from pathological symptoms." This "most unruly of all the instincts" can lead people whose behavior is in other respects normal to activities of the most astonishing and repulsive kind. In such activities, Freud observes, it is impossible to overlook the important role played by the mind in the transformations of the sexual instinct. "It is impossible to deny that in their case a piece of mental work has been performed which, in spite of its horrifying result, is the equivalent of an idealization of the instinct." It was the ancients, one recalls, that Freud describes as idealizing the instinct; and the inference must follow that in the perversions the past survives in the present, and that there is something archaic about these expressions of sexuality in which the highest and the lowest intersect and are joined. Indeed, some perversions are intelligible only if we assume such a convergence. "If such perversions admit of analysis," Freud concludes, "that is, if they can be taken to pieces, then they must be of a composite nature. This gives us a hint that perhaps the sexual instinct itself may be no simple thing, but put together from components which have come apart again in the perversions." The obscure circularity of this chain of reasoning may be interpreted as follows. The sexual instinct is not a single or unitary entity. It is made up of different components which are brought together—amalgamated, aggregated, or synthesized—in normal adult sexual activity. In the perversions, however, we see that the components have come apart again; they have decomposed, and some of them have been recomposed to form these alternate kinds of behavior. The disaggregation and decomposition that Freud had chosen as the analytic and expository form in which to treat the sexual aberrations is now revealed to be an essential attribute in the formation and structure of those aberrations themselves. The fit between form and content or analytic intellectual style and material structure is very snug indeed.

At this point, Freud abruptly shifts gears and begins without warning or transition a new section entitled "The Sexual Instinct in Neurotics." At once the reader becomes aware that the territory has

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been shifted as well, as has the pitch of explanatory discourse. Persons who suffer from such complaints as hysteria or obsessional neuroses, Freud begins, are approximately closer to the normal than the aberrants with whom he has just finished his preliminary dealings. Nevertheless, psychoanalytic investigation has determined that the sexual instinct is fundamental in the maintenance of neurotic symptoms; it provides the most important "source of energy" of the neuroses, and as a consequence the sexual life of neurotics tends in varying degree to be expressed in their symptoms. Indeed, Freud continues, "the symptoms constitute the sexual activity of the patient." The symptoms are in fact substitutes—"transcriptions as it were"—for certain highly charged wishes and desires which have undergone the peculiar and unexplained mental process called repression and have, as a result, been lost to consciousness. They have not, however, lost their force, and since they cannot be discharged by conscious mental representation, they find expression in "somatic phenomena." By means of another mysterious process called "conversion," they appear as the somatic symptoms—the paralyses, tics, convulsions, blindnesses—of hysteria. Hysteria is thus an embodiment or exemplification of the mind-body problem, one expression of that apparently insoluble—and indissoluble—relation. Moreover, hysterics are excessively civilized persons. In them the restrictive forces of "shame, disgust and morality," which are overridden in the perversions, act with decisive power against sexual desire. Yet their excessive aversion to sexuality is regularly combined with a characterising opposite, an "exaggerated sexual craving," although this craving is also fated to become at some point unconscious. Torn between sexual strivings and his aversion to sexuality, the hysteric chooses illness as a means of escaping his conflict. Unfortunately, illness "does not solve his conflict, but seeks to evade it by transforming his libidinal impulses into symptoms."

At the same time, it would be misleading to assert that such symptoms originate either solely or exclusively at the cost of normal adult sexuality—though that, Freud notes, is what he is commonly taken to be saying. Neurotic symptoms also express perverse or abnormal sexual instincts and ideas and are formed in part out of them. Hence, Freud concludes, rising to his large formulation, "*neuroses are, so to say, the negative of perversions.*" Inversion, all the perversions, and all the "component instincts" in their paired opposites—

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including sadism and masochism—appear "without exception" in the "unconscious mental life" of neurotics. We suddenly see what Freud is doing. In a bewilderingly brief few pages on the neuroses he has recapitulated the entire structure of the earlier part of the essay, which was, one recalls, about actually perverse sexual behavior. But the recapitulation is now on the level of the neurotic symptom, of unconscious mental life, of fantasies, ideas, and mental representations. It is, in other words, on the level of theory. Just as for Marx political economy was the theory of capitalism, so for Freud the neuroses contain the theory of sexual behavior in both its normal and aberrant modes of expression. They contain that theory, and with Freud's help they will contain it in an integrated form. Having decomposed the perversions into component parts, he has at once recomposed them in the neuroses. In the neuroses the language of sexuality begins to speak articulately, coherently, and theoretically.

But Freud is not content with letting the neuroses speak just yet. Instead he begins to speak himself about "Component Instincts and Erotogenic Zones," and of the linkage of the two in both perversions and psychoneuroses. He reminds us again of the role played by perverse impulses in both the neuroses and normal life, and of the unbroken series of gradients that connect "the neuroses in all their manifestations and normality." He reaches the conclusion that "there is indeed something innate lying behind the perversions but that is something innate in *everyone*, though as a disposition it may vary in its intensity and may be increased by the influences of actual life." He is speaking about the democracy of instinctual, biological life; and what is at stake are the "innate constitutional roots of the sexual instinct." In one class of persons—those with perversions—these roots "may grow into the actual vehicles of sexual activity." In another—the neurotics—they have undergone insufficient repression and persist as symptoms. And in "the most favorable cases" they have undergone such restrictions and modifications that somehow "what is known as normal sexual life" is brought about or achieved. In addition, he remarks, these roots and this constitution will only be demonstrable in children:

> A formula begins to take shape which lays it down that the sexuality of neurotics has remained in, or been brought back to, an

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> infantile state. Thus our interest turns to the sexual life of children, and we will now proceed to trace the play of influences which govern the evolution of infantile sexuality till its outcome in perversion, neurosis or normal sexual life.

The recomposition that was summarily demonstrated in the neuroses has now been displaced in historical time. In order to make the full demonstration of recomposition Freud is going back to the very beginning. The theory will exist in fully integrated coherence only after—having first disassembled the perversions—Freud has been able to take the fragments and components of infantile sexual life and show how they develop historically and emerge in adulthood into integrated coherence themselves—or into the deformed coherences of the neuroses and sexual aberrations. Once again the discursive form taken by the theoretical structure is inseparable from the experiential form taken by the material content of which that structure is the theory.

Freud begins the essay on infantile sexuality by noting that as far as he is aware "not a single author has clearly recognized the regular existence of a sexual instinct in childhood." He is indeed so struck by the boldness of this assertion that he has gone through the literature on the subject yet once more to test its validity. It remains valid. What Freud means is that no one before him had unequivocally recognized the pleasure-seeking activities of infancy and childhood as both sexual and normal. There was, in fact, a wealth of literature on childhood sexuality published during the Victorian period, but that literature tended almost uniformly to regard the sexual experiences or activities of children as pathological, abnormal, and deplorable. In the growing literature that was concerned with the development of the child, sexuality was not as a rule included as part of that development, nor was it thought to have a special development in childhood itself. Freud sets out to repair this neglect, this cultural amnesia, which is the counterpart to the personal infantile amnesia in which we all cloak this decisive period of life.

In brief, Freud sees both the occurrence of sexuality in childhood and the building up of restrictions against it and inhibitions of it in a double sense. Both the sexuality and the constraining structures are in the first instance organically determined and arise endogenously or endosomatically in the course of normal growth. At the same time,

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both sexual impulses and the constraining structures are open to influences from the outside, are affected by experience and education; and the final form which they will take will bear upon it the marks of such influences.

Freud begins with the phenomenon of thumb-sucking or sensual sucking. This early behavior itself refers back to a still earlier one, of the mother's breast, and is a search for a pleasure that is remembered. Later on, or when the mother is not present, the child's need to repeat this pleasure becomes "detached from the need for taking nourishment." The child then can take a part of his own body—his thumb—to suck on and recapture the pleasure. The pleasure is therefore autoerotic, which leads Freud to remark that at first the sexual instinct in childhood is without an object—a speculative construction of considerable theoretical depth and resonance.

The oral phase is followed by activities at the other end of the alimentary canal. The anal zone is the second area of erotogenic pleasure. As with the oral phase, the persistence of significance into later life of the erotogenic importance of this zone has a determining influence on what character or personality will be like. The third erotogenic zone in children is the genitals. This zone is also connected with a vital function, urination. Although it is not the site or vehicle of the oldest sexual impulses, it is "destined to great things in the future."

It should be noted that although Freud represented infantile sexuality from the very beginning as a matter of overlapping periodicities and interlocking phases, in 1905 he was not yet able to particularize with full concreteness what those periodicities and phases are and when they specifically occur. One corollary of this uncertainty was that he put his theoretical system together in such a way that revisions of, deletions from, and additions to it could be conveniently and easily made. This combination of openness to new experience and material with genuine systematic coherence at a high level of abstract theoretical generality is one of the identifying qualities of Freud's thinking, as is the similar alliance in him of a simultaneous commitment to the idea of the determination, and overdetermination, of all events and developments in mental and sexual life, along with the idea that such events and developments are also contingent upon accidents of both disposition and experience. An essential part of the distinction of this text is to be found in the poised equilibrium in it of the open-ended and the

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systematic, the concrete and the abstract, and the contingent and the determined, and in the delicacy with which that equilibrium is sustained. On a later occasion, Freud addressed this difficult subject directly:

> So long as we trace the development from its final outcome backwards, the chain of events appears continuous, and we feel we have gained an insight which is completely satisfactory or even exhaustive. But if we proceed the reverse way, if we start from the premises inferred from the analysis and try to follow these up to the final result, then we no longer get the impression of an inevitable sequence of events which could not have been otherwise determined. We notice at once that there might have been another result, and that we might have been just as well able to understand and explain the latter. The synthesis is thus not so satisfactory as the analysis; in other words, from a knowledge of the premises we could not have foretold the nature of the result . . . . But we never know beforehand which of the determining factors will prove the weaker or the stronger. We only say at the end that those which succeeded must have been the stronger. Hence the chain of causation can always be recognized with certainty if we follow the line of analysis, whereas to predict it along the line of synthesis is impossible.*

Such a passage suggests Freud's awareness that psychoanalytic theory, like the modern theory of evolution, is essentially a historical theory; its powers are explanatory rather than predictive.

With the arrival of puberty a further series of transformations take place. New objects appear along with a new sexual aim. And the component instincts must now be brought together, assembled, integrated, and subordinated to "the primary of the genital zone." In addition, "the sexual instinct is now subordinated to the reproductive function; it becomes, so to say, altruistic." This is at the other extreme from the archaic or primitive or perverse arrangements in which the instinct itself is idealized. Freud then passes on to the extremely complex question of the differentiation between men and women, a differentiation in which the notion of bisexuality makes an important return. In addition, this transformation involves for women a further change. In little girls, genital sexuality is experienced on a phallic model or prototype, with the clitoris as the organ of stimulation and pleasure. When a girl turns into a woman, this organ both enlarges and relin-

*"The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman" (1920).

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quishes a part of its function: "When at last the sexual act is permitted and the clitoris itself becomes excited, it still retains a function: the task namely, of transmitting the excitation to the adjacent female sexual parts, just as—to use a simile—pine shavings can be kindled to set a log of harder wood on fire." In view of the tragi-comedy that so much subsequent discussion of female sexuality has turned out to be, it is appropriate to bring forward this early and largely neglected remark, including the homely and half-inappropriate metaphor that Freud enlists to illustrate it. The clitoris does not altogether give up its excitability; what it does is to transfer "susceptibility to stimulation" to "the vaginal orifice." (Freud is in this text undecided about the degree to which the clitoris has to "abandon its excitability," and the passage is ambiguous on this score.) It ceases to be the exclusive or leading zone for female sexual activity. For 1905 that is not an altogether condemnable formulation.

Yet we cannot let the matter rest there. In the first essay there is an important theoretical subsection on the "overvaluation of the sexual object," which contains the following passage:

> The significance of the factor of sexual overvaluation can be best studied in men, for their erotic life alone has become accessible to research. That of women—partly owing to the stunting effect of civilized conditions and partly owing to their conventional secretiveness and insincerity—is still veiled in an impenetrable obscurity.

If we juxtapose these remarks with those taken from the third essay, we are left with a series of questions. Where did Freud get the information that he construes into the theoretical construction of the third essay, information which, in addition, he denies having access to in the first? It is quite impossible to say, and the matter remains veiled in impenetrable obscurity.

Nevertheless, along with the establishment of genital primacy at puberty, there takes place as well the completion of the process which permits the organism to seek and find a sexual object. Here, too, psychical preparations have been made from a very early date:

> At a time at which the first beginnings of sexual satisfaction are still linked with the taking of nourishment, the sexual instinct has a sexual object outside the infant's body in the shape of his mother's

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> breast. It is only later that the instinct loses that object, just at the time, perhaps, when the child is able to form a total idea of the person to whom the organ that is giving him satisfaction belongs.

It is then, Freud writes inconsistently, that the instinct becomes autoerotic, and not until latency has been passed through is it ready to resume and restore the original relation. The inconsistency has to do with his earlier statement that at first, at its origin, the sexual instinct in infants has no object. And since he is making conjectural inferences about such occluded matters as the origin and formation of object relations—matters about which reliable data are still today very hard to come by—one can understand his lack of certitude and his oscillation. His conclusion, however, has a sturdy coherence to it. "There are thus good reasons," he wrote, "why a child sucking at its mother's breast has become the prototype of every relation of love. The finding of an object is in fact a refinding of it." The past is the prehistory of the present in the sense that it is the necessary precondition of present existence. And history repeats and recapitulates prehistory, though at a further state of organization and development.

Although love takes many forms, the kind of love Freud has ideally in mind is associated with the idea of a vigorous and autonomous adult human being. This autonomy is a goal that cannot be reached directly, for the object that is found in adult life cannot be the identical refound object of infancy and early childhood. The Oedipal experience must be gone through and resolved. The barrier against incest—"a cultural demand made by society"—must be internalized, along with other prohibitions and restraints. When at puberty the incestuous fantasies are rearoused, they must again be overcome and repudiated. If this work is gone through successfully, "one of the most significant, but also one of the most painful, psychical achievements of the pubertal period is completed: detachment from parental authority, a process that alone makes possible the opposition, which is so important for the progress of civilization, between the new generation and the old." In view of the widespread tendency to regard Freud's thinking as essentially classical and conservative in affinity, it is helpful to be reminded of such a remark. Freud is also one of the last great legatees of the Romantic tradition in European thought. His theories are grounded in the idea of conflict, and this conflict exists in the realm of the normal as much as it does in the pathological. Even his concep-

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tions of integration are touched by it. He sees integration as falling within the larger contexts of conflict and of incompatible needs, contradictory aims, and implacably opposed demands. Such integration as he finds is never complete, rarely adequate, and more often than not unstable. He never envisages the human or the social world as composing now, or in the future, some harmonious order. There is the recognition and remembrance of bliss and satisfaction in his world, but there is no music of the spheres. In his world men and women go through a long development of striving for autonomy, but the achievement of such autonomy is arduous, unpredictable, and easily subverted.

After writing this text Freud was to live for more than thirty years. During that period he would continue to write and develop his ideas. But with the *Three Essays* now fitted in alongside of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, the new theoretical paradigm—and the new vision of human existence—that he was to introduce into the consciousness of the Western world was there in its essentials. He and his followers would go on filling in new details, adding observations, plugging up gaps, throwing out new explanatory epicycles. They would, in short, begin to operate—as they are operating today—on the analogy of normal science. But the fundamental theory was there in 1905. That it was a theory fully deserving of the name is in part suggested to us in the circumstance that nothing has come along in seventy years that remotely resembles it in explanatory power, coherence, and integrity. No intellectually serious challenges to it have taken or lasted. The supercessors of it that have been regularly announced have just as regularly fallen away. And Freud's own followers continue working on the boundaries of knowledge, about four inches ahead of where Freud left off. Such a circumstance is no discredit to them; it is one more illustration of how rarely genius of revolutionary proportions occurs in both science and other theoretical disciplines. And it illustrates as well how when such a genius occurs the world is changed.

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STORIES

Gilbert Sorrentino

SHE IS THE QUEENLY PEARL

Walking peacefully on that familiar street, or perhaps another, for who knows truly the face of the streets? I marveled that it had been only moments before, or perhaps hours—perhaps an eternity!—that I had walked this same street, or perhaps another, for the face of the street is unknowable, we walked together, arms linked, to the world another happy couple (would it were so!), for what casual stare could have picked out the terror and depravity that we both knew, now, that we had to face? I mean picked it out of our faces. She looked sideways at me, quizzically, almost as if she had never seen me before, and I laughed, embarrassed, and automatically glanced down toward the area of my manhood. But there was no telltale sign there of the passion that had almost engulfed me in its black satanic power. The impersonal city, the great, dark, thrilling city, that no one can ever know the heart of, bustled and hummed about us.

Later, over coffee, she told me, haltingly, sketchily, with sobs and in anguish, bits and pieces of her life, her sad, brave little life. I did not want to hear it. I fought against my feelings but to little or no avail; the words enchanted me, wove a glittering web, like the web that Circe wove to discourage her swinish suitors, magical, enthralling. It was a remarkable story, a remarkable life, almost unbelievable, cluttered and jumbled facts and time heaped together—yet from it a strange Truth rose like a mysterious attar. And as she talked on and on, I knew that our bond had become that of steel, I knew that evil and disastrous experiences would not, *not* prevail over our mutually beloved Ned

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Beaumont. If there was Justice on this earth! Was there Justice on this earth? Ah, but who can know the face of true Justice? As Hymen of Rhodes said, bitter and broken at the end of his long life: "Who knows the face of Justice? Can a man understand his own face?" But somehow, I believed, believed in this flower of a girl, this queenly gem, this pearl. Her small, gentle voice went on and on 'gainst encroaching night . . .

. . . just a simple little frip of a girl with vast pretensions, thought that I'd be happy with a man of marvelous intellect, a man who had read *Paterson*, say, anyone from anywhere, a hairy beast from Ocean Parkway, even. Phony little me. Well, I had the silliness knocked out of me. How I remember like yesterday, my thick little head in the oven—that was in California and I meant to scare, oh blackmail is the better word, poor Tom, working there in one of his father's platinum mines. He was happy but I missed the city. I can remember cheese Danish all over the floor and dear Tom's stricken face, that frozen visage he often affected. Then, soon, soon, I guess, but perhaps it was years, sometimes it seems like centuries, like the flight of a poem, we were heading back to New York on a 707. Tom's face in the sunlight pouring lavishly through the window looked familiar and then I realized that he looked like Steve McQueen! I shuddered and asked for a blanket, you know how you can ask for a blanket? Well, I asked for one. Then we were over New York, which I immediately recognized by the way the Atlantic heaved and shuddered. Well, Martin . . . well . . . that was the turning place in the crossroads of my life . . . that false attempt at suicide. Tom had but contempt and the like for me from then on although he always treated me well, but I could see the faraway look in his eyes whenever we had cheese Danish. There are certain things that kind Time will not erase. Oh, what a year was that! For a time I thought to return to Mechanicville where I was born and grew up. It is a leafy and peaceful village, the townspeople are kind, they laugh readily and sweat a lot, I had been happy there once for, oh, for such a fleeting moment in the scheme of things of my life . . .

For a time she could not go on and silence reigned, silence broken only by the buzzing of an insane fly somewhere, somewhere. How lucky he was! I felt my heart swell almost to bursting. Perhaps it did burst. Who can tell when the heart bursts? Often we think we know the truth. We know nothing! I thought of Cystis of Thebes, thought by all

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to be the savant of his age, who, dying, said, "I have lived the life of a lentil." Daisy blew her nose daintily in a large linen handkerchief with the initials NB embroidered in the corner. My heart almost cracked with the absurdity of jealousy, an unimpeachable pain that torments the lost. But who are the lost? Why, I asked, my face a carefully frozen mask, should I feel jealousy? Absurd! Ha! Ha! Ha!

. . . and of course you are right to laugh, Martin, Daisy opined, for she had begun talking again, when she had started, I didn't know. I had lost track of time and found myself staring at her heaving nipples, those young and strangely delicate attributes of this girl's flushed beauty. And I felt again jealousy—and something else! Something . . .

. . . perhaps a shred of pity. But you are right, there is no sense in raking over dead leaves. Let them lie and crepitate. Anyway, our return to the city was the beginning of the end, the real beginning of the end. Oh, Tom knew it—knew it as surely as he would have known that a ball had come to his hands on the end zone or something. How often he told me of those days! His eyes would twinkle and shine. Silly me! He sensed it and a coldness began to grow up between us like a wall. He stopped caring. I had my freedom, he had his business, and I became one of those gad-about women, with my first affair in the wings. Tom knew that too—for a big, and rather stupid man, he has extraordinary powers of perception. It must be his intrigue. I sometimes think that Tom even knew the man with whom I went to bed. Ah, it was a joyless bed, but I had to have my scatterbrained fling! You'll note that I'm really not crying. I seem to have something in my eye. My lover was a poet, tall, sloppy, with a deep voice and a head of wild hair. He lived in a hovel of an apartment on the lower East Side, crammed with huge bags of garbage and trash, which he often told me had blown in the window. Ah, he was a witty man! He knew a thing or two about love and had an endearing way of wearing a watchcap down over his ears that made him look like somebody's old grandma. How old he seemed, old and wise. Perhaps he really was, in some other life, somebody's old grandma. Oh, I hardly remember anything about him! He liked taxis, I recall. He knew a lot of people named Bob so that I never knew who he was talking about. He allowed his teeth to rot because it was natural and also he liked to pay dentists. He had been married to a woman who went to Idaho and lived in a chicken coop, I think. There

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she felt free. We broke up rather swiftly for some reason having to do with oral something. Tom was cruel about it, cruel. The night after we stopped seeing each other, for good, hubby came into my bedroom wearing a watchcap pulled down over his ears and began to emote the words of his school song. I wept, I suppose, but it's all so obscure . . . strange that Nature does not allow us to remember pain. But what is pain? For a long time after that I lived in bed. I would walk about once in a while in order to do things that nobody else could do for me if you understand what I mean? Swathed in the sheets, all white, like a robe . . . a robe. I've never told you about my girlhood as a singer in the White-Robed choir of my little Mechanicville church? Of course not. I remember it as if it were yesterday. Strange how Time allows us to remember itself, or something. I stood in the back row of the choir and sang my little heart out. Often I'd find a hand, not my own, beneath my robe. The Devil also stalks the Baptists, you see. How strong the pastor was, strong and dure .s. His favorite sermon was a denunciation of bare legs and low-heeled shoes. "Woe to those maidens and spouses who desecrate God's House with flat heels and naked limbs!" I can still hear his burly voice and seem to see, but I may be wrong, his flushed face. Thus did I learn first about the false face of the world. Like Hamlet. But I was happy. I seem to see from those palmy days also a cordé handbag. Odd. I seem to remember eating frozen custard of various flavors. The handbag was always stuffed with cash. I recollect a face, perhaps my own, perhaps my brother's, I don't know, for who can know his brother's face or her brother's face for that matter? too heavily made up. Those were balmy days. Who would have thought that I would come to this—this diner?

It is a cafeteria, Daisy, I offered, my heart plummeting as I stared into the dregs of my cup, the dregs of my life. My life! I bitterly mused. My heart raged in my throat like a demented chicken as I fought the despair that threatened to overwhelm me. My harsh and chilled adolescence! *I* had had no white robe! *I* had had no cordé bag! Her soft voice was droning again . . .

. . . and though Ned, dear foolish Ned, was suffering from dementia praecox or something like that, I loved him, loved him passionately, beyond rationale, loved his little dimple, his toothy chuckle, his soiled hat. And I wrote him foolish letters that, I'm sure now, must have enflamed him . . . I acceded to his wishes as far as I was able,

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but—a quartet, his suggestion that we—I'm sorry, I can't tell you my shame. His request for an old boot was one thing, but . . . not that I am a prude, not at all, I've had my moiety of thrills and such. Tom can tell you of the man, a famed translator of Lorca and college instructor of note, also a poet in his own right, who liked to dress up in my undies. He brought me an orange dress once that he called my Florida dress it was soft buttersoft and fit my body to a t marvelous it was actually it was called my Florida frock he had the most extraordinary habit of painting a mustache on his face whenever he felt blue do you like the way I'm talking on and on without any pauses or punctuation it's my consciousness streaming. But enough! I'll be studgy, is that the word? studgy Daisy again and let my consciousness stumble along as usual. This poet in his own right first alerted me to the little things, turned me, in his own perverted way, into a whole woman, if woman it be! There were so many—little things that I became akin to. I loved the way he put ketchup on his pork chops, his baggy pants, his dislike of cats, how cute he was lost on the IND, the manly way he sipped his tea. But it was not to be. He too wanted only the gross female, cared more for my girdles, bras and nylons than he did for me. How Tom laughed when I found my underwear drawer—empty! As empty as the blind heart . . .

My mouth had flown, sometime before, open in horror, so that I must have seemed the fool. But I could not "shake" that phrase, "request for an old boot." The unutterable reality of it was devastating! I was shocked far more than I had ever had the experience of sensing before. Why? I must have muttered this imprecation aloud for Daisy flashed a look of such tender affection on me that I blanched. She stupidly twisted a paper napkin to shards before my eyes—fond girl! The full horror of it struck me as a kidney strikes a clown between the eyes at the circus. How many years it had been since I had laughed at the circus! The glitter, the tinsel, the lights—and underneath the broken heart. Often more than one! It was like life itself, or a football game. A football game! And then the kindly, vapid, yet stern visage of Tom came to mind—that he, a captain of finance, should have collaborated in his wife's decadence. And dear Ned—to lust for a boot? And what was that about his painted mustache? I reeled.

. . . all too much like, my life that is, became all too much like a wild trip I once took cross-country with a man who had no buttocks and

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his friends, a warring couple who were on the way to Mexico. There to read Lawrence and become free! Ah, that was a clinical case history of a trip, I allow. Such my poor life became. The grimy towns, the rains, the chili made in one place with Heinz's ketchup, over all the grim sky brooding and also changing. The dusty streets of my wretched womanhood—if I had known when I was a girl . . . and now I seem to vagely remember sitting in my father's sinister car outside Nathan's Famous in Coney Island. Rhythmically squeezing together and relaxing my nervous thighs. I stealthily ate a hot dog the while. I remember that I was wearing a red satin garter belt trimmed with white lace and that we had come from the Bronx Zoo where we had gone earlier in the day to see the bears. How grown-up I felt! God, that's a long drive. Lucky my father had a powerful blue Buick convertible! I see in my mind's eye now, yes, now I remember, a strange man at the Zoo—he was in a corduroy cap, a seedy raincoat, drinking muscatel, I should think, from a bottle. Three-day beard. How sad he seemed! How sad and shabby! I had the oddest impression that he was once a famous lawyer or nuclear physicist—perhaps a scholar of comparative literature with svelte wife and pillared mansion from whose shady veranda you can jump in the picturesque lake. Or perhaps he was a poet of local fame whose best friend had maligned him in a roman clef. But—forgive me, Martin—may I call you Martin? Nathan's. Perhaps it was at that moment, my dad getting lobster rolls and clam broth, and I secretively engaged in the act of girlish whimsy, that my life changed, as the poet says about the yellow woods where the wrong turn will lead you into a lot of crap, forgive my demotics. Perhaps there, there was the turn that led me to Tom and Ned and ultimately here with you, dear, good Martin, here in this lonely and almost deserted diner . . .

Cafeteria, Daisy, I sobbed. I was sobbing uncontrollably now. My trapped throat raged somewhere inside the lost despair that was me with the furor of a typhoon of emotions gone mad, head over heels, all ends up, blood pounding and the lost heart black with its secrets that no one can ever know—who can decipher the dark heart's fathomless theories and suppositions? Not to mention its illogical things? Who indeed?

. . . so many things, she trilled. How variegated it's all been, now that I have this quiet moment with someone who *understands*, to think it all over. Ah, see how my eyes dance! See my lips flutter as I

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lick them with my tongue to make them shine in this harsh fluorescent glare the better to see your food and read your paper by! See how I, for a moment, forget to stupidly twist my napkin into orts. So many things . . . Mark Cross dresses, D'Agostino pants, Trunz handbags, one of which reminded me of my lost cordé, Merkel shoes, Packard lingerie—and the endless swirl of openings, parties, theater suppers with theater people than whom there is nobody like. Their closeness, their camaraderie, their need for adulation and applause, their basic shyness. And some other tributaries I forget just now but you know what I mean. Strange, how Tom was no slouch even though his brain had been injured on a six and four field punt or something. No slouch at all. Often drunk, yet he had his mind entire. Excuse me, my eyes—my eyes are brimming with tears and you'll notice that my voice, which up to now has been fairly strong, is faltering. He had some cute ideas too. Bought me French maid's costumes, nurse's uniforms, nun's habits. We had our good times and our bad, our ups and downs. Another American marriage of the beautiful affluent. Among whom we circulated all the time. Did you know that many affluent women wear support hose and drink a lot of instant coffee? Then, too, they favor tuna glop for buffet suppers. These things keep their husbands on the golf course, so Tom told me anyway. Oh we had a lot of little talks. And my father, he of the clam broth and lobster roll purchase, he liked Tom, so there must have been something good and fine in him, for my poppa could always smell bankruptcy afar off, e'en o'er the briny deep, a nice turn of phrase, no? Yes, poppa liked the big sweet lug, and I knew he did because at their second meeting he, poppa, allowed him, Tom, to break one of his, poppa's, most treasured piñatas. I remember . . . I remember . . . the little gifts falling on Tom's head, his big silly grin . . .

I kicked my heart into blinder obedience and stifled the cry that, molelike, tried to get out of my throat. My poor Daisy! Daisy! If there is a God in heaven, I began, but a counterman's sullen stare silenced me. How I would like to shake his hand now, this humble slob, this dumbbell with the inarticulate wisdom of Estonia in his bowel. Somehow, he knew. With a swift motion I was up and out of my chair to get more coffee and cheese Danish. For some strange reason, a reason that seemed just outside my understanding. Daisy broke into sobs as she looked at the cheese Danish. At that moment her face took on the

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unmistakable frown that one gets on a face when one smells gas. Was that a jet plane whining overhead? Thus does memory serve us all. Did not Simon of Mesopotamia note that "I remember, therefore I was. Yet what was I?" A moment later and it was over and the dear girl gorged up her Danish happily, washing it down with coffee. Time in its kindness heals our memories of its grievous wounds inflicted without regard to race or creed or status. Does not a rich man as well as a poor yell a lot when he is punched in the mouth? Marx forgot these basic truths. Suddenly, I adjudged that Daisy had flown swiftly to the ladies' room. Had I been wrong, after all, about her? Fool! Fool! Blind stupid fool. How I had hurried on, a frail canoe with the current, rushing from the past! And now it was all too clear what a mistake I had made. I bit my knuckles until they hurt me like coals of fire. I mean like if coals had been applied to them. Thus was the sharpness of my teeth. Then she was back, eyeing me narrowly and with a curious stare as if realizing that it was I that she had earlier looked at as if seeing for the first time and not someone that she had indeed seen for the first time. So does the mind trick us despite our most careful ideas about things to do. I suddenly understood Kant's description of the mind as a "what-not." Then, somehow, she was back, her trim, lithe form across the table staring at mine, words tumbling from her mouth . . .

. . . dances, balls, how he tried to fill my life with laughter and joy! Vast annual benefits for dread diseases, how we ladies posed for the newspaper photographers, trying to expose just enough of our thighs to arouse the silent and unknown audience out there—somewhere! Who knows who will ultimately see a photograph? We did our best, the parties to stamp out crab lice, which even some of our most attractive young matrons harbored in their curlies, odd word, that. Yes, don't look aghast, it's true, even our most affluenced ladies get them now and again, from subway toilets more often than not. Think then, of the sympathy we had for those unfortunates who lived with them day and night! Somehow, at this time I remember sleeping a great deal—to escape from the reality of what Tom thought were my days of happy hours. He often called me his dozing Daisy—stranger to say, he could turn a phrase after business hours. In my waking moments I espy him, always in the middle of a group of the most exciting celebrities, the kind you see in the *Post* on Saturdays, in the back somewhere, all smiles and dopey tuxedos, those shiny wives and their

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svelte husbands. Yet who can see the anguish beneath? Most of them would probably rather be eating a wiener or whatever they call it . . . Tom! Tom, always, always in the very center, the smile he bent on the Governor's wife as he listened to her speak of her work with Albanian superintendents in the area of Tompkins Square Park, 16 blessed acres in the teeming streets. She had brought over thousands of them, freed them from Communist oppression. Their musty babushkas and dusty berets gave the little park but yet another touch of color. They were hope-stuffed days if you follow my suggestion. But then . . .

Later, under the blind stars, we found ourselves in some park, which park I don't know, that is oft the beauty of a crowded city! Out of the wonted bustle of the streets we strolled hand in hand, Daisy's face oddly peaceful in the glow from the sodium vapor lights that rustled above. Our park! Somehow I seemed to say this, if aloud, I don't know, but she looked at me with such a glance of fear—fear, and at the same time, yearning. The dead grass, the broken benches, the sea of glass shards that reflected the moonlight like a million rare jewels—all joined in to make this a night to remember and to mutter strange things meant only for the ears of somebody who normally might seem startled at such spoken oddities. Such was Daisy, I dared hope? Who can know the heart of a woman? Wasn't it Emerson at Walden Lake who uttered, "A good woman is asmoke"? Though we have been forced to believe that they are strong, self-reliant, stern and singleminded, yet we do not greatly err if we consider them as cupcakes—luscious arrangements of tender flesh that live and breathe perfect affirmation. Of course, some of them are ugly but God loves them. Though they rightly demand equal pay for equal work, who can know the true desires of a dame? So these questions raced through my splintered feelings and I shot a glance into her shining eyes, eyes whose glow rivaled that of the diamond-showered park through which we aimlessly walked. "Aimlessly I wander through the park, my heart a toad." The line came to me suddenly. It was the power of poetry that had struck at me, blindly, as it often does in an atmosphere redolent of Venus. Her shining eyes! And then my throat closed up, I hoped not permanently, as I felt her odd little hand seek out mine in the healing dark. Somewhere, far off, an Albanian shrieked . . .

. . . I see—don't deny it, dear, dear Martin—I see that you are glancing at my oddly shaped little hand. Allow a sigh as I am brought

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back to the time when I baked endless loaves of black bread, guised as a peasant girl, hair in a thick braid down my back, my full flowered skirts and simple blouses something to see. Don't turn away! It's all true . . . I lived with a poet, another one, they have always been my weakness. We found each other, blindly, like two moths who seek out the flame that they don't know is fatal! He came to a kind of small fame in his click and then one day went down the alley in Brooklyn—a remarkable place, so elegant in its regular whatchamacallit—down the alley with the garbage and threw himself away. When he returned he was—someone else! Now I understand that he has become a model for characters in vicious, ugly, and slanderous novels that are written by a friend of his—some friend! Once a dedicated fake alcoholic, now he supports the apple juice factories or orchards or something. Silly me! But then! He was fire and music! How I baked for him! He became angry when I gave a good friend of his, another poet, a little poon while he was away at work. Odd. Now he walks the lonely streets, an odor of rose hips emanating from his beard. How he would have laughed had he seen me a scant few years later in my Muzzis and Cazzos, tresses done by Mr. John, the sculptor turned coiffeurer or what do you call it? barber? Whatever, my hair, my clothes, my tattooed garter done by Crazy Clyde in black and crimson. See it? Don't be ashamed, silly Martin! How memory recalls life at the oddest times, how it is relentless in its works, so that we all are serfs to its gross custom, like the configurations of its works or not! How long it has taken me to learn this simple rule if you choose to call it a rule. I do—but then, life is not negotiable . . . is it, Martin?

My heart seemed to claw at my spleen with fangs of burning fire and I felt my legs giving way. But Fate was not to be! I steadied and we walked on and on and on . . .

. . . certainly I was on the brimstone path by now, how do *I* know? I flung myself on its rocks and other sharp things it has there on it, thorns and things. All around it—how one can get hurt there! Often I would cry out in my helplessness these very words. And the answer would come, always the same: Bajji's dark lines—"The pinching shoe gives pain until it is removed." But I was not yet ready to believe it. I found myself, with Tom's blessing, in Taos, where I had gone to find "place." It is only there and in other spots like it that this phenomenon occurs. Artists know this. Instead I found an ex-war hero whom I

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whipped with his belt. He was all heart and a little bit of a disappointment. I told Tom about it and he bought me a pair of boots. To such passes had our union become! Yes, he paid and paid and paid again—now, I comprehend, it was to surfeit me with the hot flagons of freedom . . .

My tears burned my cheeks, if such they were. How, I reasoned, could the man be such a brute? To buy this slip of a girl, this waif, a pair of boats! What else was he saying but "sail away, leave, begone!" Who could blame her peccadilloes? My spine cringed and tongues of flame burned my very throat.

. . . whirled me through and through his meaningless social life, his sterile and impotent and utterly blague social life as such it often purports to be . . . purports? Ha! Is the paradigm of such! How I raced back in my mind through the fields of the past! Yet I often wonder was it I who raced? I mused on a sweet boy, sweet Ralph, who, under the stands at the high school football field, got uckh all over my skirt. It *was*, after all perhaps, I who raced! These bittersweet memories helped to ease the strains of this abhorring life that I had coming to me after all was said and done. It was my shoe and if it didn't fit, then wear it! I knew the Truth but would not face it! Once I thought of myself, as someone else, in the dim twilight of an Ohio town, sobbing on an Indian mount, my skirt up to my waist, lusts exposed to the stars. How do you like that? Sic semper ad astra. How curious that now rings in my ears—but then it meant . . . everything! There is a red Chevvy pickup lost somewhere in the mists of time back then too, but who knows what it means? It might as well be the park across the bay, the children's carrousel and the likes. How these soft images would torture me amid the endless forced gaiety of my life with Tom . . .

She sank slowly behind a broken bench into the sparse grass, and I followed, sinking too. Chilly, I placed my coat over her legs, her poor legs, and her strange little hands. I mean she was chilly, although after removing my coat, I too felt the strange chill across my back. Or was it *only* my back that was chilled? I dared not think of it. In any event, we were close, I could smell the faint odor of some exquisite perfume rising from her warm body and thought how good it was that she was no longer chilly. Your hands are so warm . . . and strong, she murmured from beneath the coat, and then she grasped them tightly, so tight that I thought I would cry out with the pain that coursed through

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my hands, particularly my fingers, it was but a foretaste of the pain to come but in my madness I ignored it, ignored—everything, even the queer twittering of my conscience, that, like some obscene rodent of night, tittered. Suddenly, she placed my hands on a spot I dare not name. Grass stains appeared on my trousers, somewhere a flashbulb popped, I seemed to gaze out a window at waves that broke on an undiscovered shore, a phonograph record scratched over and over, its lonely song ended, we would have let the phone ring had we but a phone. Blind stupid fool! I thought, and just then a roman candle burst far above the bay. I could only imagine its glorious effulgence plangent on the wintry sky off there to the sleeping suburbs to the north. Hours passed, or perhaps it was only moments—sometimes I think it was an eternity. Would that it were it! She was speaking now, her voice soft and fulfilled, muffled because her mouth was somehow lost, lost in one of the pockets of my coat which latter I now gently lifted off of her. Dear, girlish voice! But I found that I was not listening, instead, my ears seemed to hear the erotical rasp of "another," the insouciant creaking of her stays as she rattled the ice in her highball and her voice rose to ever a higher pitch of hysterical fury. Her warning flared in my brain . . . what was that warning again? No matter, it was! That was enough for me. And over all, like the guffaw of a demented warlock, howled the bitter wind that chilled me to the very soul, the wind that could only have been coming down from Canada! The very word seemed freight with horror even then. How strange.

. . . and in the tiara-like glitter of madcap nights how often I thought of Berkeley and of my faux pas there, a stupid act that destroyed what happiness we had wrested from the bowels of the California air. But were we really happy? Such a question often haunts me yet and troubles the night's repast. Who can interrogate the face of happiness, and who can tell when it passes from our clutching hands? What mysteries holds this cruel and mortal coil, is it not? All I did know was that we had reached the nadir of connubial relationship long before. What else but that shabby oven trick—yes, trick! For I did not want to extinguish this little light, and yet . . . I wished that I might be a pair of jagged drawers battling across the moors of salient trees. It was in a book, I think, that I read of a girl who got her husband back to New York by putting her head in an oven. It was as if the book had been written for me! It had waited for me, its true reader . . . don't you

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often find that a book will do that? Wait? My emotions swirled and churned, beat and blended, until I was taken in memory to a windy afternoon on some dunes somewhere. I can see him now, a film critic, painter, short-story writer, novelist, and all-around sport, deshabille behind the shifting sands while I attempted to perform an unspeakable and unnatural act upon his supine frame. Yet his manhood was recalcitrant. God! My shame was such that I felt like sinking right through the dune. Think, then, of my position. Of course, the oven beckoned like an old friend. And, in a way, though I lived, I did not live. Can life, true life, be honestly thought of as just a bunch of things put together daily that you do or not? How foolish these quick are!

Great storms of conflicting emotions ripped and punched their way through me, my hat, that I had somehow forgotten to remove, flew from my head, my trousers seemed strangely torn, my head pounded and ached. It was true, so! Of course it was true. I knew, with a knowledge surer than death, closer than whatever you might care to espouse, knew that I had betrayed Tom Buchanan, Ned Beaumont, and even the pure and simple love that I had had for Daisy. The cruel lust that oft will prove not to be denied had triumphed and I had sullied something fine and good. In her innocence she had opened like a clam to me and I had witlessly plucked her naive gift with no more care than a beast.

. . . oh, so many things I did to save it. Often I walked around in a fog. I even tried Mrs. Ashby, the famed seeress, but she got sick when she looked at my soul in her ball. "Bring me a hopeless alcoholic!" I remember her keening. And all this time, Tom malingered on the edge of total despair, rich and handsome though he was and, by the by, still is, as a cursory examination will prove. My dream in those days was to work in a garden somewhere, say in New England, Vermont was my dream. I would bend gracefully among the flowers, all in shapely black, plucking or cutting or whatever you do, pruning, I love gardens. And Tom would be sitting nearby, working on a novel about the platinum business—what really goes on behind the scenes—the joy and heartbreak, the greed and jealousy, and the terrible, constant fear! But it was not so ordained to be thus as I came to comprehend acutely and to to my great chagrin, annoyance, and black despair. And now, Martin, my poor, dear Martin, although I can't blame you as can no full-souled woman blame any man who loses the fight to the lusts that

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cascade through his frame—how well I remember my Ned ogling my bras—I feel that it is only right, as we near the end of our really good talk, only right to tell you—although I cannot blame you, dear man, knowing intuitively that you were horribly aroused some time before our rendezvous—how long ago it all seems!—I feel, anyway, that it is only the right thing to do that I inform you that I have been pregnant for fifteen minutes! Yes, Martin—I carry your unborn child!

It was as like to a thunderclap as one could fair approach. The winds howled. I laughed aloud into the tooth of them. Stupid mankind that shall never be plumbed as to its dumb acts and so forth! So I shouted. I must have seemed the maniac to Daisy, whose hands went to her womb to protect the life that grew there. Leaping up from the grass, I pulled her up and we started off across the deserted park that now seemed like a landscape of the moon. Don't . . . hate me . . . Martin . . . Martin? I laughed at the hidden moon.

Later, leaving the abortionist's office, we embraced. There was something real, something lost yet very personal in the way that she kissed me. I felt a kind of liquid sunshine in her mouth, a taste of the purest honey. Had I but known her years ago! I stifled a sob and cleared my throat in which a scream of despair, despair and loss hung there. And now, her voice, somehow happier now—who can plummet a woman's many moods that change like the light on the clouds as they sail, stately galleons, over the face of the unknowable sea?—went on, almost happy now. What is it that women want? I asked the ignorant wind . . .

. . . I led cheers, hung around the pavilion at Lake Hiawatha, hay rides and french fries, trips to the city, fun was all was my gauche motto, my cri de coeur. Harvest moons, dirty songs, the Friday night dance. My girlish heart was bursting with witless joy! A foolish girl who wished to marry a mechanic, I can see his black fingernails now. Later he became a fairy and did artistic interesting things in New York or something. It is all gone . . . now. But Tom had made my memories cheap and for that I can never forgive him, no, not if he crawled to me on heels and toes, never! And then I met Ned Beaumont and—you know the rest, dear Martin. We'll never tell of this night's warmth, shall we? They'll never understand and it's best we bury it in the midst of time.

In my lover's misery I nodded affirmation to her query. I whistled

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merrily, or so I made it seem, at the approaching mantle of dawn that threw itself across the blushing sky. She must not ever know the secrets of my heart! Yet I had known her, known her as man has known woman till the end of time. They can't take *that* away from me, I laughed and Daisy echoed my laughter, thinking it was because she was tickling me in girlish frivolity through my hat. In a sudden doorway we embraced more hotly and I took her again, passionately, roughly, my teeth scarring the mailboxes behind her glossy head. My dear, she crooned. Her loins surrendering. I . . . I'm . . . pregnant . . . again . . .

How odd, I thought, as my manhood exploded deliriously for the second and then the third time. My tears mixed with hers as she fell off the milk box on which she had been standing. Did we know each other's hearts? And did it matter? All I knew was that her life was rougher than steel wool, darker than midnight, blacker than blue . . .

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THEN AND NOW

EDITORS' NOTE: *Many people involved in the plastic arts, particularly the older ones, have been talking about the recent changes: the enormous shifts in taste, sensibility, attitude toward money, the nature of the art market, and of course the kind of painting and sculpture being done. We've asked the following painters, sculptors, and critics to contribute to a discussion on the differences between the art of the forties and fifties and the scene today.*

HERBERT FERBER

An artist on art is suspect: his bias may be hidden behind rationalization. Nevertheless I will begin with a few general statements. Art in the following applies to so-called Fine Art.

Abundance, at least in the West, has been the signature of our time. In the case of art, availability and easy familiarity have, paradoxically, helped to lower the criteria for understanding and value. Seductively available in schools, museums, and public places, art is also big business and is sold "hard" to an audience conditioned early by education, cupidity, and the desire to appear cultured. The public demand is both manipulated and met. Everything goes: old art, new art, good art—and bad art. True artistic experience is jeopardized by a deluge of reproductions, prints, casts, and showmanship leading to mindless "reminders" which are "certified" as conveying aesthetic values. All of this is implied in the paradox referred to before.

In the forties and fifties modern art was an unfamiliar and foreign domain for most. The public was on the outside and rarely invited in. When the doors were opened there was often antagonism and disbelief on the part of critics, curators, the public, even artists. A good deal of snobbism and vituperation was involved in the discussion and showing of the new art. It was indiscriminately attacked for being too subjective, derided for being "visceral," and therefore not understandable. That small group of artists which was

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the nucleus of what came to be known as the New York School could not live by their work. Their friendship for each other, the endless eager talk, their sense of being on the margins of society, and their mutual support were crucial as they strove to create works which eventually made such an impact on the world. At the time it appeared to be a disastrous collision. There was talk of a schism between artist and public. Hindsight, however, tells us that their genius was consonant with other nonconformist trends favorable to their development. The resolution and healing of that schism over the last twenty years has made it possible for artists to expect a reasonable chance of living by their talents and of becoming respectable members of society. University qualification for teaching is almost *de rigueur*, and the result is academicism. The move from bohemianism was less an escape from alienation than a slow assimilation into society—no longer the "starving artist" who may just expire, unknown and unseen.

Those who were first recognized were, almost without exception, in their middle years when they were surprised by the turn of affairs. Their artistic characters were fully formed and they were committed to a style and development which was impervious to success, no matter how it affected their personal lives. Today, however, young artists *expect* recognition and support. There is little of the niggardliness from public and critics which demands privation as a prelude to success. On the contrary, youth, as in other sectors of our society, has, in itself, become a "value." Certainly the history of art is seeded with startling examples of early genius as well as of genius gathering strength in later years. Yet, in an endeavor to be sure not to miss the boat again, as they did in the forties and fifties, curators, critics, and collectors are attempting to form or foresee history. They are investing heavily in the young, the new, and the newly rejuvenated old styles. Total exposure is believed to insure, by some democratic magic, total understanding. What amounts to a continuous exhibition is bolstered with various kinds of "show biz" to promote attendance.

To be sure, there is no end of Madison Avenue technique to reinforce shaky convictions. As William Phillips has pointed out in his recent criticism of Tom Wolfe's popular journalism, there are many whose ignorance masquerades as support for the "old time" values, as well as eagerness to accept the new as if "new" were in itself a value. At the same time, ironically enough, there is an uneasy acceptance of the witless and flattering charge that the art which came to fruition in the forties and fifties was a "sell."

Each of these attitudes creates doubt about the qualifications for passing judgment by the vast new audience. The easy familiarity, the difficulty of dealing with the sheer weight of numbers, and the multiplicity of styles has

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reinforced the vulgar belief that "liking" or not is sufficient for judgment. Everybody has an opinion on art; often no longer prefaced by "I don't know much about art but." There is a kind of freewheeling expertise on everything "cultural" which does not hesitate at being authoritative. Some "experts" do not hesitate to babble about psychology, science, philosophy, etc., but certainly in art every man's rhetoric goes.

Sensitive writing on the arts and high level criticism is rare and seems to have little general influence. I am inclined to think that in the present climate of reactionary politics, vast and overwhelming developments in science and technology, disillusionment and despair about the future are bewildering and contribute to confusion of standards, not only of art. Museums showing handicrafts, furniture, and industrial design objects cheek by jowl with painting and sculpture does not help to clarify the brew.

In contrast there was a more sanguine mood in the forties and fifties. The Second World War was horrible but it was considered a just war; an interruption and condition of the move to more equitable relations. In those years a sense of excitement over discovery of the new pervaded intellectual and creative life. Art was intensely personal and subjective, while dealing with abstract forms which were the "subject" but not the "content" of the works.

Today, in contrast, the new realism is "objective" about the expressionless streets, bodies, and faces which are its "subject" *and* "content." It is of interest that paralleling this "objective" stance other recent art shares with music and literature an impersonal use of depersonalized and industrial materials and methods: electronics in music and art, as well as machines and landscape itself in "earth works"; in literature optical reportage and play with words for the sake of play; the revival of the "camera eye" in fiction and art.

Compared to these recent forms abstract expressionist art was a "cry in the wilderness" demanding that the audience reexamine its complacency in the hot light of the "content"—a content which, even now, appears complex, indirect, and difficult. A sense of embattled confrontation was in the air. An unusual intellectual effort was required in order to come to grips with the meaning of these works since "subjecct" had disappeared. I believe that by and large the public has never been willing to accept this challenge and is willing to settle for marginal satisfactions. Even where art is moving in really new and important directions its meaning is often fudged by merely objective description or description of the "subject."

In the forties and fifties the public was unwilling to adopt a dictionary to help it understand the new language of art. It has now embraced the language of Babel.

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THOMAS B. HESS

In the 1940s and 1950s, for the first time in the history of art, American painters moved to the level of what Barnett Newman called "world thought."

Earlier American artists (with the usual exceptions to prove the rule) had dedicated their lives to proving that America could exist in art. In other words, that a European philosophical concept known as "America" had sufficient character to produce images that reflect the national ego—the Rocky Mountains (by Bierstadt) for example, or the Mississippi (by Bingham), or Niagara Falls (an aqueous reply to the ultimate sublimity of the Old World's Vesuvius in eruption), or skyscrapers, suspension bridges, and Gothic farmers with pitchforks. Often such provincial works have charm. Often they are intricate, pictorial inventions formulated to express equally complicated, intellectual and experiential structures. Anything but primitive. They can generate a wry, sharp, poignant sense of drama. Nonetheless, the ABC of their aesthetic—the element that formulates style—derives from Italian and French eighteenth- and nineteenth-century masters. (With, again, the usual exceptions, including the early Copley, Eakins, some Homers, Ryders, maybe Marin, Arthur B. Carles, Edwin Dickinson, for example.)

New York-based artists during and shortly after World War II had the daring, ambition, intelligence, talent, and, above all, the cool analytical genius to comprehend—each painter in his own terms—that it had become possible and necessary to bypass Paris, to go beyond cubism and surrealism, and still remain in the great traditions of Western modern painting. To put it another way, for the first time Americans were able to confront major parental figures in Europe (for example, Jackson Pollock envisioned a kind of flat allusive space different from Picasso's and Miro's; Newman broke the formats of Mondrian and the constructivists), to elude them, avoid being smothered by them, yet still work in the contexts of Cézanne, Géricault, Michelangelo, Giotto.

The brilliance, energy, excitement, gaiety, intensity, and pathos of those years have kept them vividly in mind for all who lived them. Their (our) recollections have become, one imagines, a bit of a bore to those who didn't. That's a social issue. The important difference between the times of Pollock, Newman, and Rothko, for instance, and of such younger artists as, let's say, Joan Mitchell, Hellen Frankenthaler, and Robert Rauschenberg, is that for the second group, the first "broke the ice," to use Willem de Kooning's generous phrase about Pollock. The younger artists were able to consider the level of world thought as a *donnée*. If they wished, they could react against the international, intellectual, cosmopolitan positions of the abstract expressionists,

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and revert to regional argots (as some pop and photo-realist artists did); others could extrapolate abstract-expressionist proposals to their logical extremes (as in happenings, environments, and much minimal and post-minimal work). The big difference was that suddenly, as it were, young artists could start from the high road.

This, it seems to me, is the critical change that took place between the fifties and the sixties, between, say, Franz Kline and Frank Stella. Other differences concern collectors, galleries, marketplaces, and other phenomenological trompe-l'oeils. There always have been comers, hot properties, and has-beens; I'm old enough to understand that. The fantasists, social realists, and magic realists promoted by the Museum of Modern Art in the early 1940s (Darrell Auston, Peter Blume, Jack Levine, for example) were just as angry when they got jostled out of the sun by the emergent abstract expressionists as some of the latter have been about pop and color-field phenoms ("no names, please," as Ad Reinhardt used to shout at the Artists Club).

The point is that New York developed an artists' community* which later become international. It took the place of Paris as Paris had of Rome a century and a half before. "Everything else," as Barnett Newman once wrote, "is everything else."

GEORGE L.K. MORRIS

Official American attitudes toward the avant-garde have never been known for quick reversals—that is, until the late 1940s. I doubt if there has ever been so fast a turnabout anywhere as that shown by U.S. museums and galleries after World War II. In the present decade the trend has been circling, as it strains to repeat the first salutory shocks.

In prewar days it was next to impossible to obtain more than spasmodic glimpses of American abstraction: museums mostly refused to show it; no critics gave sensible reviews; it could find no galleries and absolutely no public. I won't take space to list the few notable exceptions. Official backing was reserved for a movement in the opposite direction, which depicted American life in the raw. While dragging myself through one of these tasteless displays, I observed to my companion that when curators are so blind to quality, God help us if they ever do accept abstractions: God hasn't helped us.

What caused the reversal? Obviously the artists had something to do with it. Secondly, an era of contemporary-museum domination was opening, particularly in New York. Curators, trustees, and even a few critics had

*The New York artists' community developed in the 1930s, stimulated by government-sponsored artists projects. A number of artists, especially Barnett Newman and Philip Pavia, understood the importance of such a network through which ideas can be exchanged, and they both worked selflessly to encourage it.

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become aware that their predecessors were all hooted off the stage for opposing each important art current as it appeared; they would never be laughingstocks, come what may. So they have proceeded to enshrine every absurdity that comes along—not exactly a road to distinction. Europe has presented a parallel trend, although the museum shows, being government financed, are apt to be less capricious.

Alas, there is one element which cannot be taught, and that is an eye for quality.* It wasn't long before shock-value became an appreciable commodity on the market, and it came as an unexpected bonus; the trouble was that we were soon given exhibitions as noxious as the American scenes they had displaced. Of course we are all aware that each new direction in art, music, or literature is apt to prove distasteful to the uninitiated. That doesn't mean, conversely, that everything unfamiliar will someday prove distinguished; it takes more than novelty to survive a second glance.

Quite naturally, with forces commanding such formidable organs of publicity, painting and sculpture soon became big business as curators went on the payrolls of collectors; I'll leave this aspect of the contemporary scene to others. My interest lies in its effect upon the artists themselves. For it seems to be implicit in our time that no one who achieves universal stature is able to sustain his quality. Few would grant that T.S. Eliot ever again reached his level of 1923; Joyce, Stravinsky, Richard Strauss, Picasso, Léger, Braque—they all followed similar patterns in varying degrees. (Mondrian did better—his fame was largely posthumous.) What a contrast to the Renaissance, when old age usually brought final fruition; and this held true up until the end of the last century.

Something must have gone wrong somewhere. Certainly modern methods of publicity, with their stress on sensation and the cult of personality (it's a "name" that sells a painting), could well prove inimical to profound development. Closely allied is the above-mentioned emphasis on novelty; there are indeed times when old dogmas wear thin and a complete reorientation becomes imperative—we have been through several in the last hundred years. On the other hand, there are periods when art forms need consolidation; it can take a long time for a tradition to reach maturity.

Most convolutions throughout our era have been implemented in the name of freedom, and, to the creative mind, freedom is particularly precious. However, in art the word can have different connotations. Who is to say that Raphael, who brushed very exactly, was any less "free" than Tintoretto, who was demonstrably loose? Each was sufficiently free to realize his potentialities.

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*I am aware of the ambiguities latent in this phrase; perhaps it can best be conveyed through examples, and they can turn up in the most unexpected quarters. The late Andrew Mellon certainly had an eye for the old masters—compare his bequests in Washington with those of other "great collections," some of which hang adjacent. A.E. Gallatin had it for modern art, as was shown by his museum at N.Y.U. In 1942, the N.Y.U. trustees (who didn't have it) ordered all his masterpieces of cubist and abstract art removed on ten days' notice.

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Sometimes it is even embarrassing to reflect that during some of the greatest periods of creation there was comparatively little freedom for anyone; there was self-discipline, and here we come to something else again.

The present decade would seem to be one of stalled momentum, and perhaps that's all to the good. Abstract expressionism came as a necessary cathartic, with its emphasis on spontaneity; it demonstrated what transpires after limited premeditation, and with quality consciously disregarded. Minimal art followed as a logical antidote, but so muted that there was hardly enough activity to discipline. There has been a renewed emphasis on hard-edged abstraction, and its relatives— neoplasticism and constructivism. There are environmental, conceptual, kinetic, color-field, and other movements still on flimsy aesthetic bases. Realism (where the bulk of American art always lurked anyway) has recently developed sufficient shock-value to find its way into the avant-garde museum and gallery circuits.

Modern sculpture, architecture, and painting have been with us now for many decades. (It should be noted that precursors can be found for all the above innovations before World War I in France, Germany, and Russia.) Periods of trial and error have been essential; in the plastic arts, nothing can be appraised until it is seen—theories mean nothing until formalized. The artist, a victim like everyone else of restlessness and insecurity, must evaluate in seclusion what happens in his work under untried circumstances. Art is an expression of its time and even more of its creator, not only of his virtuosity but of his judgment and discrimination. The hour is overdue for a refinement of sensibility in our vulgar modern world; perhaps, against the pressures of contemporary life, the artist can again concentrate on the creation of the beautiful object, which, after all, has been through the centuries an ultimate aim of aesthetic effort.

ELEANOR MUNRO

Art in these four decades offers a microcosm of evolution in nature, and whether one prefers the rites of spring or the scattering of the seed depends on one's conceptual and aesthetic taste. But an unnatural phenomenon that cuts across the period, disjoining the first two from the second two decades, was money power. In 1949, *Art News*, which then always published prices of one-man shows, quoted Jackson Pollock at $150 to $3000. By 1952, a Pollock show was listed simply "prices unquoted," suggesting something had already begun that was best handled behind the scenes. Today it is no secret that his *Blue Poles* sold in 1973 for $2 million.

Nineteen fifty-two was in fact the hinge of history for the abstract expressionists, just then given the imprimatur by the Museum of Modern Art in a major show. The movement, incomprehensible as it looked to those outside, was really soundly rooted in three sources: artistic tradition, world politics,

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and the local New York ambiance. Thus it had depth and meaning in terms of the history of the times.

Of the major art sources, surrealism and cubism have been well documented. Another source, however, still unacknowledged today because of the publicity mongering of the surrealists plus a residue of postwar anti-German feeling, was Hilla Rebay's Museum of Non-Objective Art in New York, where during the 1940s all the painters and art lovers dropped in, studied the great Kandinskys, listened to Bach and also listened to the somewhat mad but visionary Baroness. In 1946 she published a translation of Kandinsky's 1911 work *On the Spiritual in Art:* "Color embodies an enormous though unexplored power which can affect the entire human body as a physical organism . . . exercising direct influence upon the soul." One year later, and then one by one, the pioneer artists Pollock, Rothko, Kline, and so on, began making the leap away from consciously constructed (albeit abstract) form, to the new art: embodiments of power that communicated through the eyes to the psyche. Thus this art was indeed, despite Tom Wolfe's vulgarization of the insight, concept art, though it was also visually masterful in a historic tradition.

This art was also laden with literary overtones, communicated by the artists in oracular utterances in the spirit of European pessimism and existentialism: "Only that subject is valid which is tragic and timeless." Further, in its bleakness and starkness, it gave an accurate picture of the artists' poverty and alienation from the commercial mainstream.

Yet within the budding tip of the movement, a rare and liberated sense of purpose existed. Poets, avant-garde theater people, musicians, impresarios, and publishers mingled. Also, at *Art News*, a new criticism was consciously fostered to bring the new psycho-aesthetic to a wider public. It cultivated a language that was subjective, sometimes witty, responsive on an empathetic level, and rejecting of objective description (young poets in the quasi-surreal mode were among the first of these). There were some deficiencies in the criticism: it exhibited a jejune spirit of cultural jingoism (and poor art history) through talk of a wholly "new" art and of America taking over the world from Paris. There was also virtuoso exercise of the pathetic fallacy: paint was "savage," "ripped," "wild," "tortured"; compositions projected feelings of "threat," "explosion," "collapse." Also, since the aim was to write the parallel essay, critical judgments were often eschewed, so reviews read like puffery to outsiders, an attitude that angered many scholars and museum curators, who accused the movement of obfuscation and a falling-back to sentimentality and unclear thinking. However, a true richness inhabited the movement: not only its humanistic content—the fact that the works of art, like all authentic art, existed as shadow projections of the artist,

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were dopplegangers of man at a time in history—but further in its being, while ideological, also open to marvelous variation. Subthemes raised to high art by the second generation (many of them women, of whom Frankenthaler ranks first) continue to prove that.

There were, however, two factors that worked a change: one internal, one external. The method of working perhaps dragged too deep, stirred psychic contradictions ("I paint the unconscious . . .", "my lifelong concern with death . . . "), so that some of the first rank and many of the second suffered the anguishes of painter's block. Some wasted months, years, whole careers stuck on an image, a phase of style. This condition did seem to be spelling the end of the expansive phase of the movement by the mid-1950s. But the external dialectic, between the artists and the marketplace, was even more devastating.

All through the early 1950s Big Money had been sniffing around the art world twirling its mustache ("I'll pay the rent . . . . "). Some episodes, nearly forgotten now, cut deep at the time. The Quiz Show scandals that exploited youthful artists and intellectuals, and then visited pariahhood on one scapegoat, foretold what appetites and guilts would be activated in this marriage. More than one artist went the "$64,000 Question" route researching "clues" in the *Art News* library, and evaded the ax only by luck. Then the Knoedler-Wildenstein wiretapping scandal revealed that behind the red velvet, experts in illegality, deceit, and avarice were exercising their trade. Whether out of guilt, disgust, rage, or horror, or a combination of these (also human physical frailty) the literal deaths began, by the big cars that turned killer, the drugs atop heart attacks and high blood pressure that killed. One painted "speed," and speed killed. In the end the movement was ravaged. A survivor for a while—Rothko, the mythic one—went on darkening his works into the blacks of bitterness, and his suicide was only the apotheosis of a desecration he already felt had been visited upon his art.

The antithesis had been foreshadowed as early as 1953, when Rauschenberg erased a de Kooning drawing: the new phase would indeed be an erasure, a refusal to shoulder psychic anguish or historic significance. The style was formally announced in the winter of 1957-58, when Jasper Johns debuted at Castelli Gallery and *Art News* ran his *Target* on its cover. The new look would be cool, its hep meaning veiled; it embodied a scumbled, surfacy quality that would, indeed, be elevated to dogma in the 1960s. By 1961 the "death of abstract expressionism" was a topic for symposiums. Thereafter, transfers of power, between dealers, journals, critics, advisors, to collectors proceeded with savagery (I am being deliberately vague).

Other signs of the times: that year, 1961, Parke Bernet sold *Aristotle Contemplating the Bust of Homer* for $2.3 million, a result of the most pub-

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licized auction in history, promoted by big ads and articles in the art and general media. Two years later, Marlborough Incorporated, international art galleries, opened a branch in New York, luring a roster of first-rank artists from other galleries by blandishments both aboveboard and illegal (again I opt for vagueness). Also that year, Kennedy died; in the next few years, as sculptor George Segal has observed, "moral sense was suspended." The course of art ran on, through a series of reiterative, derivative, but vivid and technically accomplished styles, like the popping open of many pods. ("I am a machine," said Andy Warhol.)

Relationships between the arts and the world during the ensuing Johnson and Nixon eras has yet to be studied: the theme is the relationship between political imperialism and a Roman degree of art expansion at home. Comparatively large public tax monies were made available for the first time since the WPA (with signal differences in economic principle and aesthetic result), leading to an explosion of expensive, tax-deductible public architecture and art (some of it as redundant as the new $7 million Lehman wing at the Metropolitan Museum, or the forthcoming $5.5 million glass shed there, to "preserve" the Temple of Dendur). Feedback then conditioned the very look of the art of the late sixties and seventies: big, bold, flat, not for reasons of the "Word," or art historical tradition (*pace* both Greenberg and Wolfe), but to look good. Stark, flat, simplistic compositions fit well in corporate headquarter lobbies and on the wide, tall walls of museums for which they were deliberately made; also, colossal, naked, or primary-colored steel sculptures suggesting Paul Bunyanish male power (albeit well forged and finished), were fit for bank and office building plazas.

While producing a handsome, vigorous, extroverted style, laissez-faire art capitalism has also, however, led to a contemptible scene of runaway prices: In less than twelve months between 1969 and 1970, David Smith's sculpture *Becca* went up 150% to $250,000 and was then bought by the Met, simultaneously increasing pressure from the museum for public assistance. While the art museum has now been turned into a substitute for church, circus, and open-air esplanade as a meeting place for the leisured, many museums have at the same time instituted fees, shutting off access to the poor and culturally alienated, for whom, in reality, these monuments of capitalist evangelicalism were set up in the late nineteenth century (the Met was free to all comers by agreement with the city of New York from 1878 until 1970). With New York near bankruptcy, the Mayor has now set up a permanent Cultural Commission to oversee funding of all cultural institutions, which, it is now recognized, generate some $3 billion a year for the city.

Two failures of art in our time could be mentioned: one aesthetic, one social. A hoped-for union of the arts (foreshadowed in Paris around 1915 and

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by the Living Theater here in the early 1950s) petered out, and an alienation of the arts and artists from one another took place, partly through rivalry for funds and partly through mutual irritation with the extremist polemics many have indulged in for the news-eager media.

Graver, and symbolic of a larger failure of American society today, is the failure to invent, nurture, and stand by an effective program of populist art education, a movement begun by progressive art educators of the 1930s and 1940s, now cynically abandoned by many museums for its lack of publicity value and because, in these politicized times, the job seems too complicated.

JULES OLITSKI

I was not at all on the scene in the forties and barely, if at all, in the late fifties. I don't really feel on the scene today either. Concerning present taste and sensibility, I am bemused by collectors and museum people who dote equally, at one and the same time, upon their David Smith *and* their George Segal, upon their Kenneth Noland *and* their James Rosenquist, upon their Anthony Caro *and* their Alexander Calder. When did it begin? Did the few collectors twenty or thirty years ago of Pollock and Still also go for Ben Shahn and Corbino? In the later nineteenth century the collectors and critics who went for Monet and Pissarro didn't go for Bougereau and Meissonier too. (This easy acceptance in our time of high art alongside lesser or even meritricious art was first brought to my attention by Clement Greenberg in a talk he gave at Bennington College eight or nine years ago.)

Attitude toward money? Maybe what's new is the expectation of artists that real money is to be made in the making and the selling of art. Art dealers are quite properly out to make a profit. I doubt there has been any change in their area. An art market of one sort or another has existed for at least several centuries, which certainly hasn't prevented great art from being made, or great artists from practicing their art. Artists always hope that one day they will find their Kahnweiler. But the sad truth is there are no Kahnweilers. Even Kahnweiler wasn't Kahnweiler, at least not as he has been pictured in retrospect. Money in itself doesn't corrupt. One has to be accessible to corruption. Money can be a help, especially when you have a family. That ought to be obvious.

As to the kind of painting and sculpture being done, I don't think a time that has produced a Noland, a Caro, among at least an armful of both younger and older artists, has anything to be apologetic for.

I suppose one enormous difference, maybe unique to recent times, is the emergence of artists in their twenties and early thirties (there may even be some in their teens, though I don't know any), who are given major shows in

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respectable galleries and museums and are taken very seriously by the art public, art critics, collectors, and maybe most damagingly of all, by themselves. The young artist who feels that every move he makes is being watched by critics and collectors, by his peers and the public, not unnaturally may come to have a vested interest in maintaining his success. One painter I know—one who survived his youthful success and is now working better than ever—said to me one day, rather plaintively, "It was like growing up in public." There is value in long years of obscurity, if one doesn't go insane or become suicidal, in that, simply because nobody is looking, the habit of fooling around and trying things out gets ingrained. This seems to be true for painters and sculptors (with some exceptions) in a way that it isn't for poets, composers, mathematicians, or chess masters.

It's hard enough to take risks if you feel you have something to lose. And it's that much harder if you have something to lose at about the same time you've begun to shave. I don't think it occurred to serious young artists of my generation (I am fifty-three years old now) that money and fame would be there at the very outset of our careers. At least I myself never thought it. It simply wasn't a part of the reality of my twenties, thirties, or early forties.

There are, of course, other differences between then and now. There is an increasing emphasis on the tying of art and the marketplace to social causes, politics, certain groups or blocs of people. To my mind art is a democratic situation; anyone can look at it or make it, and everyone should have his or her chance to be seen, if the work has anything to it. That's just it. Quality must remain the paramount concern. The quality of the art and the quality of the viewer.

BARBARA ROSE

The main differences are basically in the area of: (a) the loss of a sense of community or united purpose among artists; (b) the splintering of the art public into contending factions; (c) the decline of criticism as part of a general mass revolt against authority and "elitism"; and (d) the increasing commercialization of art discourse, exemplified in the change in editorial policies of art magazines like *Art News, Art in America,* and *Artforum,* which are seeking a public larger than the specialized audience of working professionals. Originally these magazines were subsidized; now they are trying to operate in the black. Critics are still miserably underpaid, and the bulk of the writing is done by graduate students on a stipend from home. The resulting decline of critical writing is unmistakeable. Art writing is also being affected by late capitalist mergers, by means of which Harry N. Abrams has been absorbed by the *Los Angeles Times-Mirror* and Praeger Publishers has

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become a subsidiary of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, which collapsed its art division because it was not showing *sufficient* profit. So-called "art books" now tend to be hard-bound gossip columns manufactured for a public hungry for inside dope on art stars whose works they have seldom seen.

In general, the prevailing profit motive has created an ugly dog-eat-dog atmosphere, setting artists at each other's throats and bringing to the art world all the techniques of marketing, opinion manipulating, and artificial "events" that are the staples of the public relations mentality.

New York in the seventies is very much like Paris in the fifties, surviving on a glorious past, creating legends of dead or aging geniuses, oriented to pleasing middle-class consumers whose attitudes and tastes are now freely expressed and uninhibited by the judgments of criticism. Bourgeois philistinism is rampant, not only among collectors, curators, and dealers, but among artists themselves. The charming restaurants and boutiques of SoHo are worthy of the *rive-gauche*; and so are the galleries. Packed with art that is today's mediocre, derivative equivalent of the worst mindless *informel* slop and pretentious nonsense Paris ever came up with, they lead one to believe that SoHo is really about food, clothes, and decor, and not about art at all. One remembers with a certain nostalgia that there were no restaurants or boutiques on Tenth Street.

Which is not to say art is not still being created in New York. It is, but the best of it is largely unnoticed. The focal center of energy has dispersed with the result of a much-vaunted "pluralism" welcomed as a way to get everybody into the act. Commercialism, lack of discrimination, competition, marketplace ethics, etc., have artists attacking each other. They are probably more alienated than they have been since early in the century. "Pluralism" is another way of saying that the art world has no focus, that the center no longer holds. It lives on today as a fragmented, disintegrated, self-interested milieu that produces much that is frivolous, decorative, and, in the worst sense, demoralized.

Two things give one hope: One is the emergence of women artists as strong independent figures; the other is the flowering of photography in America. The move to take art out of museums, which was initiated in the sixties, has produced some monumental sculpture (e.g. Oldenburg, di Suvero, Bladen, Rickey, Meadmore, Liberman, Calder) of real quality, along with a lot of corporate knick-knacks that give one an uncomfortable sense of art glut.

The shift in the base of patronage from the private to the public—government and corporate—sphere is changing the kind of art produced. The future of easel painting probably lies as much in the hands of the Chase Manhattan Bank as it does in anyone else's. There are too many art schools

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producing too many young people who think of art as a means of dropping out *and* staying with it, living downtown while thinking uptown. They are aided in their pursuit of groovy "lifestyles" by indiscriminate government grants which help to lower the level of art as well as to reduce the meaning of critical comment, for critics no longer select and choose when judgments with financial impact are made by bureaucrats.

The bureaucratization and decentralization of American art are characteristic of the seventies. The whole country is now over-run with artists who, not being geniuses, are the first to try to destroy any sense of cultural hierarchies in the name of a false democratization.

After all this nay-saying, however, I must conclude by remarking I find it most agreeable that today the groupies in the Spring Street Bar are boys, the artists, curators, and the critics are, in large part, women. For this reason alone, the art world, such as it remains, will never be the same.

HAROLD ROSENBERG

It has been apparent for the last dozen years that American art has been slipping into a deepening lethargy of mind and imagination—a paralysis of the creative faculties that parallels the political and economic crises of the West.

To artists the symptoms of decline have been unmistakeable; they are manifested primarily in a general absence of enthusiasm and a cynical respect for financial success. Art since the beginning of the sixties has been dominated by the self-defensive effort (which could be considered heroic were it not so stupid) to isolate painting and sculpture from the moods and concerns of society, including artists as members of society.

Now that formalist art and art-for-art's-sake criticism have run their course and terminated in exhaustion, a movement has grown up, as is usual in evolutions toward disaster, to attack not the causes of the trouble but those who have been calling attention to the fact that things were not going well. A version of the "new conservatism" in politics is being promulgated, according to which the main obstacle to social stability and progress is not the prevalence of monopolies and multinational corporate looting, but the persistence of radical social criticism among intellectuals.

Throughout the sixties the attempt was made to cover up the steady debilitation of American painting and sculpture by flag waving about the School of New York as the heir of the School of Paris art movements. Today, these art movements are seen as no longer worth inheriting. In the view of aesthetic conservatives, modernism itself is finished; we have entered a post-modern era. Art, they say, is capable of mounting to limitless heights, pro-

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viding it rids itself of the immature illusion, fostered by futurism, expressionism, dada, and surrealism, that art can change the world (as if the world hasn't been changed).

In the May issue of *Commentary*, Hilton Kramer, *The New York Times'* tireless Meter Maid of the arts, affiliated himself with the burlesque-house song-and-dance monologist, Tom Wolfe, in order to blast "the 'advanced' middle class" that has supported avant-garde art. "About manners and the volatile ethos of our cultural life," gurgles Kramer, "he[Wolfe] knows a great deal—as much, in my opinion, as anyone now writing;" and to this outstanding philosopher of culture, Kramer offers his partnership in exposing "the class that gave to the votaries of the avant-garde their conspicuous and protracted purchase on our cultural affairs."

This is the "new conservative" line applied to art. Kramer wants nothing less than the "reopening of some fundamental questions about the relation of art to the society that produces and exalts it." In the proposed reassessment "an art that flatters or at least accomodates itself to established power is not automatically dismissed as contemptible." The double negative of "not automatically dismissed" is typical of Kramer's rhetorical sneakiness—his point is that art ought to accomodate itself to power.

The suggestion that the fading antagonism of artists to middle-class values spells the end of art as a serious pursuit is sufficient to cause the cesspools of Kramer's sarcasm to bubble over. "What class is it, I wonder," he shrieks, "that Rosenberg imagines he writes for in the pages of *The New Yorker*? The proletariat?" Apparently, Kramer believes that all individuals belonging to the middle class must necessarily have the same ideas—and the ass-kissing ideas of Kramer at that. What will the middle class itself do if every element in it, including artists and critics, follows Kramer's advice and "accomodates itself to established power"?

The basic difference between art today and twenty years ago lies in the increasing amalgamation of painting and sculpture into the United States cultural-educational-entertainment system. Not that the earlier art had revolutionary social ideals; but it did have the advantage of leading a separate existence, if only from neglect.

The coming together of art and society affected art in the following areas:

1) *Changes within the artist.* American postwar art reflected the grandeur of underground ambitions. Action painting and abstract expressionism were adventures in self-transcendence. With the rise of the new art audience in the fifties, art transferred its interest from the myth of self to practice as a profession designed to satisfy the recently emerged corps of collectors, historian-critics, and curators. Instead of seeking a language bearing on his existence,

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the new-style artist engaged in perfecting the formula for a trademarked product.

2) *Dissolution of the community of artists.* In the forties artists constituted a more or less isolated community. Their social gatherings both in New York and in the summer art colonies manifested a principle of self-segregation. The presence of a bloc of artists provided a conversational underpinning to the solitary work of individuals, and helped to muffle the inevitable outbursts of ignorance, triviality, and careerism.

With the rise of art into social prominence, the habitats of artists became infested with dealers, agents, reviewers, collectors, public-relations people, feature writers, media celebrities. This sudden efflorescence pried apart the cell structure of the artists' community, like roots tearing up a sidewalk. The late Barnett Newman complained that the new stars of the art world refused to talk. This attitude was encouraged by formalist criticism, which discounted the artists' ideas and feelings as irrelevant to the success of the work. Thus the artists' community and ideas in the art world went down together.

3) *University education of artists.* In the past, artists were trained by other artists in art schools and studios. The student artist lived, worked, and learned in an environment of creation. All this was changed with the transformation of art into an aspect of cultural education. At the university, the student artist is surrounded by persons engaged not in conceiving works but in accumulating knowledge. To meet the requirements of the grading system, demands were pressed for the rationalization of art teaching. If problems and solutions could be defined in nuclear physics, why not in painting and sculpture? In the classroom, painting came to be broken down into essential elements—line, plane, form, color—and solutions were proposed for handling these problems. The history of modern art was converted from an epic of heroic pioneers and intellectual adventures—what Kramer sneers at as "the legendary cénacles of avant-garde incendiaries"—into a step-by-step climb up the formal heights of the "School of New York." There emerged the artist without background who knows the history of art through tracing formal resemblances in slides and reproductions, and who conceives picture making in terms of technical recipes, but who is entirely ignorant of the role of art in the struggles of the modern spirit.

4) *Transformation of art into a mass medium.* The availability of money and celebrity has transformed the production and distribution of art into a big-time enterprise. With hundreds of millions in public and private money spent on art annually, there is an essential need for continuity of supply either through current production or through certification of works produced in the past. Thus art today has been expanded to include the crafts of all times and places, from copper coffeepots to jungle gods. The deluge of aesthetic com-

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modities has diluted the intelligence of modernism to near-extinction. The subduing of art by the cultural environment threatens to reduce painting and sculpture to aspects of the communications and decorations industries.

Today, the survival of art depends on the capacities of individuals to recover their initiative against the automatic processes of mass society. In exploding the dream of stabilized cultural progress, the present financial and policy crisis among art institutions provides an opportunity to shake off the ideological and bureaucratic structure built upon the arts in the past fifteen years.

ROBERT ROSENBLUM

How one compares then and now is certain to reflect problems of generation and maybe of geriatrics. If anyone under thirty-five were asked to weigh the dead past against the living present, the answer would not be too sensible, since the New York art scene of the 1950s is, for the young, as mythical as that of, say, early twentieth-century Paris or, for real juniors, of fifteenth-century Florence. On the other hand, for those over thirty-five, nostalgia and pride may take over and falsely pinpoint a Golden Age of New York at exactly the moment they first flexed their own youthful muscles. I suspect, then, that most senior citizens, and even middle-aged ones, will diagnose a sad decline in the high standards they imagine they helped to create or to recognize.

They will be wrong, of course. The facts of history, which here include those of the psychology of aging, show us that most art critics and artists become blind and/or hostile to the art of younger generations. Baudelaire could be passionate about his senior, Delacroix, but then went for Guys instead of Manet; Ruskin could fervently defend old Turner as well as his contemporaries, the Pre-Raphaelites, but vilified his junior, Whistler; Gertrude Stein may have things to tell us about Picasso and Gris, but is beside the point on anybody who followed her own Cubist generation. (The alert and flexible Diderot, who promoted his juniors, Greuze and David, is a shining exception here, as is Barnett Newman, who, unlike most of his painter-contemporaries, followed ardently and without Olympian condescension, the innovative art of the young.)

The story of the last twenty-five years bears out these generalizations. We have all too often watched the hardening of critical arteries, a sour spectacle that should teach us all that when we don't understand the young, it is better to withhold judgment than to attack them with the seemingly timeless values of our own lost youth. Harold Rosenberg's contempt for almost everything consequential (Jasper Johns belatedly excepted) that postdates his own

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abstract-expressionist generation is the classic case here; but so is the way that Clement Greenberg's absolutism, at times so heroic and illuminating in the late forties and fifties, has become totally historical and irrelevant to all but his robot apostles, who, in their carbon-copying of an ancient master plan, seem to have been born old. In their growing distance from the present, such critics illuminate problems of generation warp and psychology more than helping us to see new, unfamiliar art, which can only become accessible by a sympathetic approach to individual works and artists. Criticism born of hostility and incomprehension resorts to windmill tilting: put-downs of entire categories (all pop art or all minimal art or all conceptual art is bad), sociological exposés, aesthetic theorizing that determines by principle, not experience, what has to be major or minor art. It deals, that is, with any issue but the specifics of the new art itself, which always remains invisible, generalized, or caricatured in these assaults.

This all too common brand of critical atrophy was recently exemplified in these pages (*Partisan Review,* 1974, no. 4) by Barbara Rose's vituperative attack on the Museum of Modern Art's *Eight Contemporary Artists* show. Disliking or not understanding the art, she ignored it (the eight artists were identified only in a footnote listing and went largely unmentioned in the text) and chose instead exactly that kind of jeering polemic (behold corruption, the collapse of standards, sick personality cults, and so on) which, ironically, she in turn was so right to attack in her later review of Tom Wolfe's *Painted Word.* Wolfe's garbled, mocking efforts to expose fraud and folly should serve as a warning. When critics, even formerly responsible and compassionate ones, begin to find contemporary art vacant, trivial, or conspiratorial and then long for some hazy Arcadia (when art, they think, had quality and critics and dealers, integrity), they join Wolfe's philistine ranks.

But happily, younger art of the sixties and seventies need not threaten all older spectators. There are enough first-rate critical responses among them, as of course among the young, to make one believe in progress since the forties and fifties. I am not referring to the disastrous wave of high methodological seriousness which weighed down the pages of *Artforum* in the sixties, when Greenberg disciples and equally formalist counter-disciples developed thought and prose of such inscrutable greyness that they could make even Jules Olitski's gorgeous paint expanses look more like illustrations to Wittgenstein than like peach down and perfumed mist. I am thinking rather of the healthy fusion in the last decade of the techniques of art history and art criticism, whether in terms of Leo Steinberg's finely honed yet pungent blend of enormous historical erudition, intensely personal perception, and Nabokovian prose, or of Lawrence Alloway's ability to present tough new art (for example, Sol Lewitt's) with the lucidity of an historian accurately analyzing

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and chronicling the past. And I am thinking, too, of the high new standards of what is usually dismissed snidely by intellectual art writers (who think they know more, but who usually know less) as mere journalism. Writing for the dailies or the weeklies can often be tonic, for it demands a suppleness and alertness that can disappear at the more ponderous academic pace of monthlies and quarterlies. I, for one, learn far more from Robert Hughes in *Time* than from most of our pretentious, long-winded writers, for he avoids last judgments in favor of communicating a vivid, fluid continuum of facts, ideas, and things seen. The same holds for John Russell in *The New York Times*, whose graceful but firm command of the old values of Western civilization, whether Shakespeare or Berlioz, expands rather than narrows his receptivity to the present. His newspaper accounts of, say, Don Judd, Joseph Beuys, or Richard Long are models of how to describe innovative art with knowledge, love, wit, and intelligence and how not to succumb to the generation disease that afflicts so many of his contemporaries. It may well be that the demands of wide public orientation encourage the virtues of a succinct and visually descriptive prose style (most "serious" art criticism, amazingly, is helpless at conveying in words what art looks or feels like) and of an open, flexible taste. These journalistic requirements may in part be responsible for the heartening rejuvenation of Thomas Hess in the weekly columns of *New York Magazine*, where he now seems more responsive than ever before in conveying fresh observations about art both as new as Dorothea Rockburne's and as old as Degas's.

Art now, of course, may seem less weighty and resonant than art then, but when it does, we should remember that when they first appeared, the now classic masters—Gorky, Pollock, Johns, Stella, Warhol—looked quite as controversial and shaky. Time creates sanctity and gravity, and today the young view Rauschenberg or Newman, so often scoffed at by their contemporaries, with the same hallowed respect as Schwitters or Mondrian. Already, many sixties artists have taken on, for me, this classical stature—Dan Flavin, Carl Andre, Don Judd, Robert Morris, Kenneth Noland, among others—which feels more like past than present; but the last ten years have gone on to offer a bounty of mind- and eye-stretching challenges—Gilbert and George, Alan Saret, Rafael Ferrer, Sol Lewitt, Robert Smithson, Michael Heizer, Jan Dibbets, Dorothea Rockburne, Richard Long—that would never make me reject the unsettling present for the settled past. What does seem different now is the greater openness of the situation in which no single artist or group occupies center stage or is obliged to bear the forward thrust of some linear evolution of art invented by critics and historians (although Greenberg disciples still cling to this outmoded view). And as a counterpart, America no longer seems, as it did in the 1950s and early 1960s, the exclusive place where

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new art could be made. Europe is again alive and well. The furious polemics of the old days (when one had to fight passionately to defend the new, whether Kline, whose work to some looked only like chimpanzee scrawls, or Lichtenstein, whose work to others looked only like dumb replicas of comic strips) are over, and artists, like spectators, can embrace a far wider range of experience. Personally, I am happy to be able to enjoy both Philip Pearlstein and Richard Estes, Richard Tuttle and Dennis Oppenheim, without deciding who is winning an imaginary race, just as recent revisions of the history of nineteenth-century painting have made it possible to respond to the varied pleasures and viewpoints of both Constable and Friedrich, Courbet and Holman Hunt, Manet and Gérôme, Monet and Fattori, Whistler and Alma Tadema, without disqualifying a priori the lesser or the seemingly peripheral. We may miss some of the battles and mountain climbing of New York's past, but it may be high time to settle down and enjoy, from the historical summit of the 1970s, the rich and multiple views of art both now and then.

JACK TWORKOV

In the 1950s modern American painting achieved its independence from European modernism. The exhibition "New American Painting," which was circulated by the Museum of Modern Art in 1958 among all major European capitals, established the prestige, one could almost say the dominance, of American/New York painting throughout the non-Communist world. It was also just about then, 1958-1960, that American critics declared the death of abstract expressionism and young painters began to abandon a torpedoed movement. It was not too long after non-painterly painting, pop, and photo-realism replaced abstract expressionism that the line was open to the "death of painting" and to conceptualism, performance and body art, video, and so on. What is not very clear is who was decisive in leading the parade of movements after abstract expressionism—the artists or the museum curators and the critics.

The chief difference between then and now is not primarily in aesthetics and taste but in the size of the art world. The artist's role, specifically his ability to influence what reaches the public as art, is miniscule, surrounded as he is by the overwhelming size of the peripheral art world dominated by the museums, the art journals, and the critics.

It is, however, too simple to exaggerate and heroicize the fifties. Abstract expressionism, while originating in this country, was after all only one in the whirlygig of movements that characterizes the entire century. What is impossible to ignore is the influence the art market—under which must be included the internal needs of museums and art journals—has on the succession of art movements.

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The art market is, of course, simply part of the market which characterizes the kind of society we live in. It's rather easy to heap contempt on the art market and to avoid the obvious: where money is concerned, the artist is no less acquisitive than anyone else. It is an interesting question as to which has a more negative influence on his gifts—fame and money or poverty and obscurity.

One also needs to be cautious about accepting or rejecting a movement as a whole. In every movement, however bizarre, there are at least a few who go beyond mere novelty and must be disentangled from their movement and seen for themselves.

What is most symptomatic of "now" is the role of the museums, the critics, the art journals. The museum, as it functions for the general public, is better understood as an exhibition theatre than as museum in the conventional sense. As a theatre, turnstile traffic and income from admissions must figure in their exhibition strategies. The museum's self-interest lies as much in exhibiting itself as in the art it exhibits. The curator's ego easily matches, if it does not surpass, the artist's ego. An exhibition is oriented toward making a huge heap of instant art history beside which the quality of the art shown is pointless. Where the art does not pinch any of the senses it becomes the critic's role (and it is often his chief role) to endow the work with some kind of ideological or intellectual rationale.

The "death of painting," and frequently now the "death of art," has led to the deprecation of the eye and the hand. Insofar as there is any justification for this attitude, it is not necessarily found in the art that embraces ideas or reflects a truth about the visual arts as such. Rather, one can find that it reflects the disillusionment with the art of the moment, the society in which it tries to survive, and the art market. It suggests that there may be sound reasons for the disillusion about our art as there is about our society.

The difficulty for the artist is that his alternatives seem to lie outside the process of conscious decision making. If this is true it is one reason why the critic and curator have become all-powerful.

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POETRY

Peter Handke

NONSENSE AND HAPPINESS

For Jean-Marie Straub

On a cold, indescribable day,
when it does not want to become dark and not bright,
the eyes neither want to open nor shut
and familiar sights don't remind you
of your old familiarity with the world,
nor as new sights magick a feeling for the world,
—the Two & One poetic world-feeling—,
when there exists no When and But,
no Earlier and still no Then,
dawn sweaty and evening still unimaginable,
and on the motionless trees only quite rarely a single twig snaps
—as if it had become slightly lighter,
on an indescribable day like that,
on the street,
between two steps,
the sense is suddenly lost:
the black man walking toward you in his leather coat—
you want to slug his face,
or throttle the woman reading off her list before you in the shop.
And more and more often the thought frightens you
how you nearly did it,
—a jolt was still lacking, the mysterious JOLT
with which love set in at one time
or the wild resolve to lead life your way,
or again between two steps,

"Die Sinnlosigkeit und das Glueck" from "Als das Wuenschen noch geholfen hat" © Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1974.

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the certainty of a formless kind of
immortality . . .
(Then you read in the papers of some who were struck by this jolt and
you wonder why they are still so few.)
Wherever you look now—everything greenish-discolored
at such moments
as on a too briefly developed photo,
the objects half complete,
and no hope of completing them,
every sight a rotted fragment
without the idea of the plan,
which became lost,
still raw-girdered and already a ruin,
which you avoid, fearing
you will collapse with it
—that also goes for you, and for you there:
your faces—
ready for the scrap heap,
propped up by what subscription? by what theatrical sense? what
troupe with a *Weltanschaung* monopoly?—
faces one would like to break over one's knee—
and that goes as much for you yourself,
one depreciating object among others,
which, having seen all these sights, only glances down along itself,
glimpses the back of its own nose there,
once left, once right,
excrescence of an excrescence:
—if only the eyes would close,
—if you could only squint at such moments,
soothe the nausea in the eyeballs,
—and it would just be MOMENTS (after which you could sigh)—
but not this TIMELESS, EMPTIED-OUT, SPEECHLESS, FUTURE-
REPRESSING, INANIMATE, SENSELESS HUMBUG
IRREMOVABLE FROM THE ZENITH, SCRATCHING YOUR
SOUL FROM YOUR BODY.
—Someone has stopped on the street
and cannot go on:
not only he has stopped,

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everything else has too,
and so it seems that he walks on,
and that the rest also walks on.
But he only pretends to walk;
and the way he regards the horizon at the end of the street
is also feigned;
and the French fries which he smells somewhere while he pretends
to walk
—it might be altogether somewhere else—
he only notices as a last kindness towards himself:
actually he doesn't smell anything anymore,
and the French fries are homeless remnants
from that already unimaginable time
when every object still hugged its meaning:
recollection of a picture in the church where the Just stand beneath the
Blessed Virgin's coat.
"When I was a boy, everything was right:"
what false longing,
for only rarely was it right when you were a child,
mostly the feeling of forever standing in a draft with
burning hangnails—
and this hangnail feeling has returned;
so that you shouldn't say:
"The sense was lost," but
"Nonsense is rediscovered."
There was no plan,
nor the notion of a plan,
and the inbetween sense, the moments of love,
of horniness, of frenzy and of "righteous" anger you now recall with
nausea.
HELP—No more bad jokes . . .
Where can you still look?
Where does the last contradiction survive?
Where is the sight to revive you?
But all questions have become rhetorical,
routine memories of real questions,
and because the questions aren't meant seriously
the lips move theatrically along with them

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and flinch when they touch:
that is how far
the parts of your own body
have been turned inside out
into a revolting outer world
where everything separates into things
that repell each other.
Yes, everything has turned into abrasive outer world in this state
and in the open-skull an unappetizing something, once called brain,
puffs itself up in the draft.
Instead of consciousness nettle-like vegetation,
skin sensation and allergy:
an incalculable time of rashes, of goose bumps, of excemas, of soreness.
An unpleasant itch
when the lips accidentally touched each other
—you have become ticklish to yourself.
On a scaffold high above the street construction workers
with colored hard hats on their heads wave for a crane-load:
come on down, to the same level,
and take off your ennobling hats,
you extortionists,
then we'll see who's at more of a loss!
The sky above the crane could be a picture,
which rekindles the necessary patience,
but the well-worn sky heals nothing either,
nor the word that yet soothes so often,
which you say to yourself:
the clouds glow repulsively,
lie in unholy havoc,
wind-wrecked,
and the earth too, leveled to the horizon.
Everything wind-wrecked.
Everything mixed up.
And everything expressionless.
AND EVERYTHING COMPLETELY EXPRESSIONLESS.
Still you feel cross
that the many who are underway
don't simply lie down on the street and fade out,

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as you yourself would like to fade out,
perhaps not forever,
nonetheless, on the spot . . .
In the old stories the taken-for-dead strain to be noticed
trying to crook their little finger—
but how to make yourself noticed the other way,
if everything crooks of itself for you
in the illusion of an expressionless liveliness?
How to express expressionlessness
when the going on,
but also the stopping,
the looking up,
but also the looking away,
the talking,
but also the not-talking-anymore
feign life with none of your doing?
As I said, rhetorical questions.
"At any moment the coffin lid would close above him for all eternity,"
it says in the stories about the taken-for-dead:
and only a first-person-story would still have an awakening.
"At any moment you would again skirt a puddle; at any moment you
would again stop at a traffic light."
It is not a first-person-story:
so you skirt puddles forever
and stop at all traffic lights.
What an effort the indifferent sleepers still make
in the subways,
lying on papers,
covering themselves with rags!
What an effort just to imagine
that after all these years they still have the strength
to reach for half-empty wine bottles!
Perhaps you will now meet someone
whom you know,
"from earlier on," you think
even if you first met him only yesterday—
that's how much nonsense already has its own time.
Any moment now you will simulate shaking hands . . .

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And the exchange of pleasantries, which now ensues,
immediately results in a harmlessness
where the nonsense finally becomes unendurable
—because suddenly you believe you are exaggerating,
and feel in the wrong toward others
and regard your state as just one of those states:
as if you behaved "like a schoolboy,"
not to be taken seriously.
So you don't take yourself seriously in company
but the nonsense is too real,
and therefore unbearable,
The face turns ugly with nonsense,
So you sit somewhere
and let it become night.
Now and then you mutely tear your mouth open
as if you had lockjaw.
A housewall is peeling.
A children's carousel is turning under a railroad bridge.
"Actually" the housewall is beautiful,
and "actually" the carousel is beautiful—
but even the prettiest sight now diminishes life.
A bombing attack of nonsense on the world:
right behind the housewall the earth breaks off into whirlpools of
the undefinable
(some call it ocean trench, others space, others hell)
and on the last atoll a children's carousel turns
tinkling, godforlorn.
Stop! Gaze at this picture:
Did not the lids lower over the eyes at its sight?
—It is no picture: and if so, it went under from your impatience
with the last bit of earth.
The gloom where the earth was
distinguishes itself from the gloom
of the undefinable all around
only by its fresher black,
and now even the whirlpools are streaming in . . .
Someone's jaw slackens
and he falls asleep,

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but this escape attempt fails too:
even dream time has been voided:
a few breaths and nonsense shakes him awake,
time and again,
like the cartoon hero by the dripping faucet,
"The time when dreams still helped" has become a sentence from
a fairy tale—
the next sequel of the adventure
again unfolds only in the cartoon pattern.
At the moment of waking
which immediately follows the moment of falling asleep
—"dreams were in the offing"—
in the shattering environment,
which had been on the verge of soothing itself,
your dyed-in-the-wool HUMBUG breaks forth again,
world-wide and skin-tight.
And even if you stare at something—
you now see everything distorted, as out of the corner of your eyes:
you grasp the air
after a dog running in the distance
as at a mosquito buzzing your cheek,
and the cat running along the wall
looks like a centipede within reach;
confined by the remotest sight!;
AND NO MORE OPPORTUNITY,
STALE AIR,
WHICH YOU VAINLY TRY TO BREATHE,
EVERYTHING AS IT IS,
EACH ONE FORCED BACK INTO HIS NICHE.
("I waited on the chaise lounge for the meaning of life to come back
to me," stood in an old autobiography.)
—And if it is like that,
and when it was like that,
all as in the old days,
and when the legs still trotted the buried consciousness
dumb-assedly from one place to the next,
—if only one knee had bent just once—
you looked, because you had no choice, had no CHOICE,

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to the floor, looked to the floor,
and finally discovered
BECAUSE you had no choice
SOMETHING NEW;
One time perhaps a green
unrolled carpet in the lobby of a movie house
at whose sight you suddenly groan
with new intimacy,
—a heartily sentimental snoring sound—,
and from the floor rises roaring relief,
and the lids lower more slowly over the burning eyeballs
and gently stroke patience back—
don't be impatient now!;
or another time a
typewriter shop,
you stare down at the machine
with paper to try it out,
and there, among the people in the shop, read:
"O désespoir! O villesse! O rage! . . ."
—Your eyes grow wide,
whatever you look at
LAUGHS—
after such long nonsense, suddenly there was so much of the world's abundance.
The opposite of nonsense is not meaning—
you just don't need meaning any more,
don't even seek philosophical sense for the nonsense:
counted-out words; which should be outlawed,
you think.
At a table in a cafe a woman sits before a glass of beer,
looks out the window
and smiles.
Of all those sitting there she is the only one
with an expression:
And when you look at her
a feeling also returns to your own ugly, deaf face,
and the indescribable day becomes describable,
it wanes,

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and when you look at the woman again
you notice she isn't smiling at all,
but only has an expression:
even the expression on her face
seemed like a smile to you.
In the newspaper the photo of a policeman
raising a truncheon:
Is he being serious? you think.
Does he know what he's doing?
How can you make him understand that he's out of his mind?—,
and on the street women continue to enter taxis,
all with the same movement
they duck and then clamp down their coats behind them:
gradually you begin to paint these different women
even as something mythical
—old hiccup of poets drunk on being—:
when a woman with water in her leg climbs in,
more awkwardly than the others,
and kindly destroys the facile PICTURE . . .
And what do you bring home in the evening?—
Such sights for example, the sight collector answers proudly.
And how do you order them?—
Because my fear of the nonsense is over
they no longer need an order.
And your own impression?—
Because the nonsense is over the sight
has simultaneously become the impression.
And the actual words?—
When I see something, I only say: O God!
or: No!
or: Ah!
or simply call out: The evening sky!
or whimper, softly . . .
And yet—
Beware of the music of the world!
Beware of the happy ending!
For even when the indescribable day came
you had been warned of previous indescribable days,

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as in the fairy tale, before you walked through the forest,
of the good fairy or of the talking animal,
—and must, as in the fairy tale,
have forgotten the warning after all.
At least, instead of the all too anecdotal happiness, you cling to the moment
when the nonsense let up and the new familiarity was felt as pain.
The dreams are in the offing.
They are there:
A large red cherry falls slowly past you down the elevator shaft.
At the end of the long row of houses, in the middle of the street,
stands a stag.
—And at least, as in the hit tune, it is time to dream again.
—And at least, the time when you can dream is a sensible time.
Already you nod to yourself in the street and shake your head;
munch, like a child, an apple in bed before falling asleep;
walk straight through puddles
and again say "merry-go-round" instead of "carousel" . . .
On a cold, bright morning
still imbued by a long
bliss-kindling dream
where you were
what you can be
—the dream itself was the fulfillment—
and at the sight of the wide sky behind the edge of the city
you look forward to growing old for the first time,
and in front of the child,
who looks at you
after he has knocked over the glass,
you think
if the child wouldn't have to look at you like that any more—
that might be the real way.

Translated by Michael Roloff

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LETTERS FROM EUROPE

Norman Birnbaum

WESTERN EUROPE, 1975

I was in Europe in June and July, drafted these notes in September, and made some changes as PR went to press in October. The point is not to stay ahead of the headlines, but to get behind them. Now Spain is on our TV screens and on our minds. The European struggle for democracy and socialism finds us with a nonelected government which has not been at pains to conceal its view of what is good for Europeans: democracy sometimes, socialism almost never. What became apparent to me was that we need a new government with new ideas.

The ways in which old cultures confront new problems tell us much about their inner reserves of confidence, energy, and ideas. At first glance, Western Europe in 1975 lacks world historical weight. An uncertain revolution in Portugal, the Communists' electoral success in Italy, the increasingly evident incapacity of neo-capitalist and social democratic technocracies (if, indeed, they can be distinguished) to control economic depression, are surely not epochal. The mass media's fusion of eroticism and pornography (a cultural version of Gresham's Law, by which inauthentic sensuality drives out the authentic kind), the flight of many intellectuals into a new hermeticism, of others into a social realism of stupefying crudity do not bespeak a culture full of possibility. Things, however, are not quite what they seem. I went to Europe this summer resignedly. I hoped to find something other than a more elegant version of our own cultural and political sterility, but did not expect to do so. What I found was that Europe has a chance to create a new political community—a small chance, undoubtedly, but history may well consist of a series of small chances (most of them, of course, missed). The enormous attention given to Portugal in the European press, the internal divisions of the left on this (and most everything else), the half-convinced polemics between left and right, were really so many communications in code. Western Europe is at sea, but its elites (and more importantly, its publics) are trying to make for new and uncharted land. A familiar rhetoric did not

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quite conceal the asking of unfamiliar and uncomfortable questions.

Our vision of Europe at the moment is obscured by precisely the most essential element in the situation—the renewed antagonisms of a society suddenly confronted with choices it had thought lay in the future. The Europeans had supposed that they were on their way to a new community, with time enough to make the transition painless. Old conflicts were to be overcome, conventional historical costs reduced, a linear path to a secular utopia begun. The new crisis of capitalism has deprived Western Europe of these consolations—or illusions. Change is once more hard to bear and even harder to control. In old Marxist terms, problems of the economic base now seem more important than those of the cultural and political superstructure. The old Marxist terms, however, are insufficient: modern capitalism integrates market and state, politics and culture. It is often difficult to say where one begins and the other leaves off. Despite serious inflation, large unemployment, and general constriction, the Western European populations are not turbulent. Profound discontent, gnawing criticism of all political elites, and occasional eruptions of protest do not attest radical revulsion for the system, much less impend its overthrow. Europeans, to be sure, are not Americans. Over the centuries they have developed traditions of collective action. Compared with Gerald Ford's country, Western Europe is seething. Measured against its own past experience, it is quiescent. Why have its antagonisms, some of them of pure class conflict, not exploded with far greater force?

There are historical moments which cast into relief assumptions which then begin to lose that self-evident quality which is the source of their plausibility. Europe can no longer count on economic growth. It cannot believe that, its colonial and imperial past behind it, the Third (and Fourth) Worlds reserve a special admiration for their former masters. World politics (the triangular struggle of China, the Soviet Union, and the United States) seem to pass above European heads, like a missile in flight. European autonomy is threatened, its historical space reduced.

Sometimes, this sort of situation results in a spiritual leap forward. Old constraints on thought dissolve, new possibilities come to awareness—indeed, are invented. A culture once repeating itself comes alive. Nothing of this sort has happened as yet in Western Europe, but in France and (especially) Italy, it might. Western European culture strikes me as in deficit, but also in search of new units of account—a new language of politics. There are two different, but connected, questions. To what extent are the political goals of the recent past unattainable, because they rest on false ideas of social possibility? But then, are new political ideas likely to be discussed by a public which is gravely handicapped by the failure of Europe to have attained one of the classical democratic aims: cultural equality? A very tentative answer would assert that

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inarticulate popular need and sophisticated thought might still join. After all, there is a European tradition of socialism, which has united workers and intellectuals.

It is, however, that tradition which is in disrepair. European socialism insisted that the claims of the political community were superior to those of the market. The unequal distribution of the social product made a true citizenry impossible. The state could bring a national community into being by appropriating the market. To do so, however, it had to promote those universal values formulated in the French Revolution—values which were often the negation of those ties of family, community, and religion which gave continuity, depth, and substance to European culture. These forces were often opposed to socialism: they offered immediate satisfactions which were more important than (hypothetical) future gains. Since 1789, the European right has known how to mobilize one sort of tradition against the left, which has rarely offered alternatives of a convincing sort.

The terms of the conflict have now changed, bewildering both left and right. The idea of an increase in the workers' share of the national product is implausible where production is declining. That decline coincides with a period in which the idea of quantitative equality has been rethought. The issue of the quality of the common life has been raised. No less importantly, the question of participation in economic and political decision has become salient. Technocrats ruling in the name of the public interest may be an improvement over capitalists maximizing their profits. They exercise domination, nonetheless.

The recent importance of issues of autonomy and quality has been reinforced by the emergence of passions once thought slumbering, retrograde, or dead. Up and down Europe, ethnic groups and regions, local communities and producers, have been heard from. They insist that arithmetical computations of the national interest which ignore their traditions, rights, and privileges are tyrannical. Once the property of the right, these demands have now taken a decidedly different political color. Confronted by a universalism expropriated by technocrats (and up-to-date capitalists), European socialists have begun to rethink the value of localism. A new alliance is nascent, among those who seek decentralization, cultural autonomy, and workers' control. The difficulty is that a unifying idea is lacking.

All of this is not immediately apparent to the visitor to Europe, nor indeed to those Europeans faithful to the ideas of 1948 or 1962. Events seem to have outrun ideas, and ideas have been replaced by words. I came to France to work with some friends on a collective volume, a set of essays on the present situation. The only one of us who thought he saw clearly where society was going, and what had to be changed, was Rudi Supek—the animator of the

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heretical Praxis group in Yugoslavia. His criticisms of authoritarian and bureaucratic socialism (and of capitalism) were precise. The rest of us were searching obsessively for new ideas. My own pursuit led me outside the seminar room, to speak with some of the dramatis personae of Europe's political drama.

The President of France is aware of the intolerable heaviness of the state apparatus. He has enunciated ideas of "an advanced liberal society" and of "qualitative growth" for reasons other than the making of images. His regime, however, includes some very hard rightists, but even their leader, Poniatowski, felt obliged to publish a book entitled *Guiding Change*. It also includes a large Gaullist rump installed in its own version of *la gloire*: the patronage system. Finally, it encompasses the capitalists. The difficulties of changing French society under these auspices seem insuperable. I put the problem to a member of the government, a civil servant promoted to cabinet rank. He did not underestimate the difficulties. He spoke with feeling of the problem of curbing real estate speculation, of the role of local concentrations of economic power—not all of them sublime. I was struck by his sense of the whole, by his willingness to use the state to develop a more just community, by his commitment to the idea of a public interest both liberal and effective. I was no less struck by technocratic underestimation of the role of public political will, his reliance on an administrative rationality which not infrequently turns into its own opposite.

President Giscard d'Estaing in 1974 won a very narrow victory over the forces of the Union de la Gauche. A year later, all that was evident was the Disunion de la Gauche. As a small "bourgeois" radical group wrung its hands, as millions of voters turned away in apathy and disgust, the Communists and Socialists have quarreled. They have disagreed over Portugal, over the Socialists' alleged infidelity to the alliance, over the question of common lists in the forthcoming municipal elections. These issues are real, but the fundamental ones are often unstated. The first is the question of who shall dominate the electoral alliance. Under Mitterand, a revivified Socialist Party seemed likely to displace the Communists as the largest group on the left. The second question concerns the kind of advance to socialism a left government would undertake. The Communists have advocated heavily statist versions of socialism—if with parliamentary control. Nationalization and centralized economic planning remain the keys to their vision of the future. The Socialists don't dispute this, but they emphasize other things. A good deal of the revival of the party (and of its attractiveness to the middle class and to technical workers) comes from its hesitant but developing interest in participatory democracy. An uneven mixture of ideas of cultural revolution, left Catholic conceptions of community, modernized remnants of the syndicalist tradition,

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have brought the Socialists within reach of the frontiers of thought. The party has its own technocrats, too, and there are some politicians around Mitterand who are not always comfortable with these (or any other) ideas. Still, a generation of rethinking on the French left may be finding expression in something other than Sorbonne theses or sectarian polemic.

Rethinking is not, however, conspicuous in the Communist Party. It has fused Leninist organization with Jacobinism and something else that is French: *ouvrièrism*, a term difficult to translate. Let's say that it means that salvation is accessible only to and with the working class. (The Party, and not only on account of its persistent Stalinism, has had terrible difficulties with the intellectuals. Its culture is that of the French working class, almost ineradicably petit bourgeois.) Now it was seeking a new image, but what of its substance?

I talked about these matters with a friend who is a Communist Parliamentarian, a member of the Central Committee. He received me in its new headquarters, designed by the Brazilian architect Niemayer, in Paris's working-class east. The building was an adequate representation of the Party's present state of mind. A moat-like entrance provides for protection against hostile demonstrations (or worse), the construction emphasizes the texture of cement, the offices are functional boxes—and the whole conveys a hint of modernity. My interlocutor wore long hair and a *chemise de sport*. He was proud of his coauthorship of a recent Charter of Liberties published by the Party, to show that its France would be even more rigorous about Constitutional liberties than bourgeois democracy. I refrained from observing that not since the Soviet Constitution of 1936 had I read a more compelling document. We discussed the controversy with the Socialists. The Communists feared that they would be diminished to some fifteen percent of the electorate (from their usual proportion of about twenty-four). Having become the largest party of the left, the Socialists would then turn about and enter a center-left coalition, excluding the Communists. The right would pay a high price to avert an electoral victory by the united left. No reason, I said, for the right to pay any price with the left tearing itself apart.

The French Communist Party, rigid in its loyalty to Cunhal in Portugal, faithful to the Soviet Union (which does not quite repay its devotion, since it seemed to have supported Giscard during the last elections), has a very long way to go before it resembles the Italian party—open, modern, and convincing in its devotion to pluralism and democracy. The French electorate will continue to have doubts on this score. And even should these (huge) difficulties be overcome, the French Communists will have to show that they can develop a modern conception of socialism. Paradoxically, the effort to reassure the electorate may make the Party less venturesome with respect to

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social experimentation. Its own ambition is to become what the Radical Party was in the Third Republic, to exercise power in the state because it has power in the society, in unions, nationalized industry, and the civil service. That kind of power, however, is just what the newer forms of socialism question.

As the train from France traveled down the Rhine to Bonn, I thought about the differences between the countries. Perhaps either the Socialists or a Communist-Socialist alliance would in time resemble the German Social Democrats, a stolid party with its base in the unions, the civil service, the intelligentsia. The Social Democrats' strength was their weakness. It was so integrated with West German society that it kept putting reforms on paper—and kept them there. Forty percent of its parliamentarians were civil servants, its Finance Minister has told its left that talk of changing the market economy was nonsense ("Quatsch"). Its ideology is a compound of technocratic socialism, paternalism, and the inimitable German idea of the extension of democracy through *Bildung* ("education" is not the right translation, "cultivation" might be better). Its ties to the serious sectors of the cultural industry are close. At the moment, to be sure, it is internally divided: Helmut Schmidt worries much more about his own party's left than about the Christian Democratic opposition. To a recent demand for state control of banks and investments, he replied with supreme pragmatism: the problem was that there was no money with which to invest, so the question of control of investments was irrelevant.

My own view of the Federal Republic has always been quite positive. The cultural recovery from Nazism seemed to me authentic, the political recovery not much less so. An enlightened Social Democracy, despite its defects of imagination and daring, did seem able to provide social advances of a profound kind. The provision of public services was large and efficient, there was a proposal for participatory democracy in industry (serious enough to worry American firms in the country), there were new equalities for women. Juergen Habermas, Germany's most distinguished social thinker, had said that the process of overcoming authoritarianism in social institutions could now begin. Germany's first democratic student generation since 1848, the generation of the student revolt of the past decade, in his view would achieve a democratization of society. Alas, I found little that was encouraging during my visit.

The economy was in serious difficulty. In France and Italy, a socialist opposition confronts governments identified with capitalism. In Germany, the Social Democrats have found that they are no longer administering a welfare capitalist society. They are managing (with no conspicuous success) an economic crisis which leaves very little room for more welfare. The strategy of both wings of the party has assumed continued economic expansion. The left wing thought that this would provide resources for redistribution, areas for

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structural innovation. The right wing supposed that this would allow an exceedingly tranquil modification of capitalism. The right wing's strategy faltered even before the crisis. Its coalition partners, the Free Democrats, refused to accept the Social Democrats' plan for participatory democracy in the control of private enterprise. The right wing argued that if things could be kept quiet, if no one in the country were frightened by thinking about too much socialism, the party could win a majority. What, asked the left wing, would a totally moderate party do with that majority—except try to conserve it by doing nothing? Under present conditions, each faction is true to itself. The left wing cannot quite believe that this is the final crisis of capitalism, but certainly thinks it a good occasion to extend public control of industry. The right wing thinks that maximum caution is in order, as the government has begun to reduce social programs.

I visited a former Social Democrat minister at the Bundestag. The streets outside were patrolled by armored cars, but coffee and cake in the cafeteria were traditional—and good. The minister was an intelligent technocrat. He had tried to effect university reforms which would connect higher education more closely with the world of practice. A previous generation of students, however, wanted a different world, the professors wanted to do their research undisturbed, and everybody else wanted to hear no more of, about, and from the universities. Germany's reformed universities now have a new student generation interested mainly in diplomas and jobs: they are sure of attaining only the former. The older professors resent the changes that have occurred, the younger ones despair of making meaningful contact with the society. I also visited the new university at Bremen. It was supposed to introduce a new curriculum, a new relationship to practical activity and the professions. Two factors have made this impossible. The university has become a battlefield for contending political factions. Inscriptions, pamphlets, and placards in its halls might lead one to think that the German Federal Republic was on the brink of another 1917. The world outside, however, is implacably resistant to revolution, and particularly to one whose avant-garde consists of students on state scholarships. Bremen suffers from unemployment, but the workers have not made common cause with the students. Indeed, the electorate has just inflicted a severe reverse on the province's very moderate Social Democratic government. As I walked through the university, I wondered if the architecture had been designed with student revolt in mind. It was impossible to find anything, and all corridors seemed to lead to the cafeteria. If this was the new house of the spirit in Germany, Heine's Parisian laments were still contemporary.

I've written of hopes for the democratization of German society. The German public seems to fear, simultaneously, for the economy, the state,

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and the nation. There is a Communist state in eastern Germany: efficient, philistine, and repressive. There is a small Communist movement in the west. There is a large Social Democratic left, and an amorphous series of sectarian revolutionary groupings. Worse yet, there is also a lunatic group of terrorists and kidnappers. The public—not without help from presslords like Springer and politicians like Straus—frequently confounds all of these tendencies. The Social Democrats have panicked. They have introduced decrees and laws to keep "radicals" (not very precisely defined) out of the public service. The democratic student generation from which Habermas hoped for so much can hardly get into the society's institutions, much less change them. The atmosphere reminded me of our own country in the days of Joe McCarthy. It would be absurd to portray Germany as unredeemably reactionary, right to fear that it contains an ideological vacuum into which almost anything could flow. The old German problem is there again, the separation between spirit and society. The Social Democrats might be more realistic by being somewhat less obviously so.

I took the train from Bremen to Rome. It wasn't only the weather that changed on the other side of the Alps. The electoral victory of the left in the municipal and regional elections had reinvigorated the country. There was hope that something could change. Most of the left's success was due to a Communist advance of six percentage points: every third Italian voter chose Communist candidates—frequently as a protest. The Socialists emerged with twelve percent, and in a large state of disarray. Their coalition with the Christian Democrats in the government had clearly cost them much over recent years, and their campaign repudiated their own recent past. Now, however, they have to find a way to ally themselves with the Communists and retain their distinctiveness—not an easy problem for a party inconspicuous for drive or resourcefulness. The Christian Democrats with some thirty-six percent of the vote remain the largest party. Their loss of ground and a catastrophic crisis of leadership and morale suggest that their decline will continue.

The left's victory has deeper causes than the corruption, clientelism, and cretinous inefficiency of the Christian Democrats. Relative prosperity and education have altered Italy. When in 1974 the electorate inflicted a severe defeat upon the right by voting to retain the law on divorce, *La Stampa* of Turin (which belongs to Fiat and represents the liberal bourgeoisie of Piemonte) had as a headline: "Italy has become a modern country." The Italian left, and in particular the Communists, has been able to present itself as the party of modernity. After the election, the Christian Democratic Party secretary—an unsavory ex-fascist named Fanfani, liked by both the American and Soviet embassies—responded by denouncing the Church. The Church, he declaimed, failed to see that only the Christian Democrats guaranteed salvation—and had tolerated when it had not encouraged left Catholicism.

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Fanfani was right: Italian Catholicism has changed, and with it, the country. The long march of the Communists to electoral respectability owes much to the founder of the party, Gramsci. Gramsci held that the Italian left had first to become an integral part of Italian culture. By fusing Marxism with the Italian republican tradition, by treating the Catholics not as enemies but as belonging to a different but related spiritual family, the Communists have made of Marxism something indigenous. They have also created an alliance of intellectuals and workers of unusual durability and texture. The third generation of descendants of Garibaldi and Mazzini (and sometimes Cavour) are found on the left, and not infrequently among the Communists.

The Communists have also been able to present themselves as a party of moderation and order. The right has employed a "strategy of tension." The Christian Democrats have connections with the neofascists, the Mafia, and the military secret services. A series of attempted coups d'état, kidnappings, bombings, wildcat strikes by dubious "unionists," terrorists with "revolutionary" slogans and police subventions, have polluted the Italian political climate for years. The strategy is clear: create an atmosphere of disorder, and open the way either for a fascist takeover by the military—or for severe repression by a Christian Democratic Party standing for order. The strategy has failed, not least owing to a free press and the devotion to democracy of a large number of Italians who are not leftists but republicans. It has also cast great discredit on the United States, whose ties with some of the more political elements in the Italian armed forces are close. In any event, the Communists have been able to advance their claim of adherence to constitutional and republican principles with considerable plausibility.

The Communists now are the largest party in Bologna, Florence, Naples, Venice, Turin, Milan, and Rome. They do not yet seek entry into the government. Instead, they continue to pursue the "historical compromise" proposed by Berlinguer, their secretary. Berlinguer (whose associates include some Catholic Communists) has argued that the party and the left generally ought not to seek power through a frontal collision with Italian Catholicism. Indeed, that collision is unnecessary: many Catholics favor the creation of a different kind of national community, and are enemies of the values of capitalism. The Communists, the Italian left generally, have already won a major place for Marxism in Italian culture. Rather than push toward immediate hegemony, why not let history do its work in more subtle fashion? By joining the Christian Democrats in government to reform state and society, the Communists can extend their influence—and meet their responsibilities as a party in which a third of the electorate has reposed its confidence. For the moment, the Communists ask (with insistence) to be consulted—that is, to have a major and not so silent share in the coalition supporting the govern-

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ment. There is another set of assumptions attached to Berlinguer's position. His mentor, the postwar leader of the Communists, Togliatti, supposed from the beginning that no revolution was possible in a country belonging to the Atlantic bloc. Instead, he set about the task of developing a party which would not be a Leninist avant-garde but a large popular movement. The doubling of the Communist vote in a generation (from eighteen percent to nearly twice that) suggests that Togliatti was not wrong. Many on the left, including socialists and left Catholics as well as revolutionary Marxists skeptical of the Communists' reformism, have doubts about the compromise. Would it not entail saving a Christian Democratic Party seemingly intent on destroying itself? And would not the left suffer, at best, the fate of the German Social Democrats and—at worst—that of the French Socialists in the Fourth Republic? The proponents of the compromise have one answer. The first priority is to preserve Italian democracy. A left which took power with fifty-one or fifty-three percent of the vote might not be able to do so; it might suffer a combination of outside intervention and a domestic coup, on the Chilean model. A left which entered government in alliance with a strong Catholic component could appeal to its Catholic allies (and their voters) to join it in defense of the constitution and national independence. The argument continues—and so does the decomposition of the Christian Democrats. The left may have, soon, no alternative but to assume office without them—but with a lot of Catholic voters having changed camps. What is interesting about the notion of "historical compromise" is its descent from Gramsci's ideas. It also bespeaks the supreme confidence of the Italian Communists in their ability to reshape Italian culture.

My Italian friends were, of course, in the midst of these discussions when I arrived. Paolo Milano, a longtime resident of New York and now *Espresso*'s literary editor, took me to a gallery opening and then to a reception. The color, elegance, gaiety of the Italians was striking. I'd just been to similar events in Paris, which seemed heavier, northern, Protestant by comparison: one sensed points being made, careers advanced. In Rome life was play, serious but full. I wondered whether Italy might not experience a new renaissance. It had been a provincial country since the end of the seventeenth century, when the center of Europe's cultural gravity shifted northward to London and Paris. The new turn in Italian politics coincides with continuing vitality in the arts and in thought. Drama, film, and the novel are very much alive in Italy; so is a concrete and yet profound kind of contemporary ethnography. Aesthetics, linguistics, political economy, philosophy, flourish. The end of fascism released enormous cultural energy. The end of the society dominated by the Christian Democrats may release still more. The Italian Communists are far from philistine: their culture is more like that of Lunacharsky, not Zhdanov.

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Italy's struggles to extricate itself from the consequences of breakneck capitalistic expansion and authoritarian political tutelage seemed simple—when viewed from Lisbon. I arrived in Portugal (for the first time) with Western Europe's debates about the Portuguese revolution resounding in my head. The French Communists had denounced Soares and the Portuguese socialists. Berlinguer had received Soares with cordiality, and the Italian Communists had declared that the Socialists' electoral victory ought to be respected. Portugal itself presented a much more disordered reality—and continues to do so. The country is poor and backward, and forty percent of the population is illiterate. Political expression had been blocked for generations: there were neither institutions nor traditions to call upon. What is remarkable is not the confusion, even anarchy of the situation, but its relative peacefulness. A clerical north of petty landed proprietors and local patrons opposed a more industrial south, which also had a radicalized landless proletariat. A professional and mercantile bourgeoisie long since emancipated culturally, anxious to introduce liberal democracy, confronted an energized working class which wished to proceed directly to socialism. A rigid and dogmatic Communist Party, Stalinist in its leadership, struggled with Socialists who looked to Western Europe. (I spoke with a member of the Communist Party's Central Committee, who took most of the time to denounce the Italian party.) To the left of the Communists and Socialists, anarcho-syndicalist groups, several Maoist sects, and unrepressed proletarian energy threatened to outflank the Stalinists and Socialists alike. Meanwhile, revolutionary officers who had spent years in Africa acted as if their country were in the Third World—and justified themselves by a national liberation ideology they had learned from their erstwhile African opponents.

Lisbon's streets were full of slogans, vendors of newspapers and pamphlets, and of arguing clusters of militants, mostly young. In July, the demonstrations were peaceful. The banned Maoist group MRPP put thousands into the streets, followed discreetly by two military police jeeps. The period of ugly rioting in the north, of the burning of Communist headquarters and the attempted lynching of Communists, was still ahead. In early July, however, it was possible to see the tensions that were to explode in the summer and the fall—and which may still wreck the promise of the revolution.

There was a book fair on in the center of the city, and the proliferation of titles was striking. I found endless translations from contemporary literature, the whole Marxist literature (including a good many anti-Stalinist and anti-Soviet books). The best seller of the fair, however, was clearly Reich's *Function of the Orgasm*. After decades of clerical puritanism, the demands of instinct were being heard. But instinctual liberation coincided with a precipitous decline in production: the economy was in wretched shape. The European

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depression had cut exports, reduced tourism, diminished remittances from the millions of Portuguese working in France and Germany. Workers who had expropriated industries gave themselves sizeable wage increases, and even those firms which remained in private hands were in difficulties. Utopia, the Portuguese revolution insisted, was now.

Perhaps—but revolutions which seek instant utopias court great dangers, above all in countries in which the legacy of domination has immunized large parts of the population to revolutionary thought. The justified appropriation of the southern larifundia had evoked (groundless) fears of appropriation among the petty proprietors of the north. The seizure of large scale industry (by workers ignoring the Communist Party's directives for production and stability) has frightened the entire middle class. The rhetoric of the Communist Party and the Armed Forces Movement does not help. It is absurd to claim that these groups were disguising their aims. The trouble was, they were proclaiming them all too openly. The Lisbon workers were certainly in a revolutionary mood, but they were (and are) disinclined to accept almost any kind of discipline—not least, the Stalinist kind promised by Cunhal. Meanwhile, cultural conflict has spread. Families and schools are disturbed. A half century of repressiveness has disappeared—to be replaced by bewilderment, dogmatism, and anarchy. The way to produce large scale disorder, it seems, is to oppress a society so hard and for so long that when oppression disappears, everything seems possible.

One day of my visit was especially memorable. In the morning, I had a long talk with Admiral Rosa Coutinho, one of the left Bonapartists in the Movement of the Armed Forces. He was robust, intelligent, not the sort of man given to many doubts. The Armed Forces Movement had just issued an equivocal document: the revolution would rest on parliamentary forms and on a "popular power" to be organized in enterprises and neighborhoods. It was meant to reassure left, right, and center—and alarmed everyone. Coutinho denounced the ultraleftists as provocateurs, regretted the lack of support from the Western European socialists, and dwelt on Portugal's position between worlds. It was underdeveloped but European, had to become democratic and socialist but not necessarily in either an Eastern or Western European way. Bearded younger officers in blue jeans wandered in and out of his office. It was in the Ministry of Overseas Affairs: down below, disheartened and shabby refugees from Angola waited upon the bureaucracy. I came away with the impression that Coutinho and his friends had no specific program, but did have a very general revolutionary ideology they found difficult to apply to Portugal's realities. Political experience counts for something. Theirs consisted of the making of a revolution, not of carrying it through. They seem to have discovered their beliefs after the seizure of power—and

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then to have become paralyzed and frenetic as their power crumbled into very small fragments.

I lunched that day with two Socialists, a prominent lawyer and his literary wife, she a member of the Constituent Assembly. They had a splendid apartment in old Lisbon, with a terraced garden. My host called for me, easy in his silk shirt and sports car. These Socialists denounced the course of the revolution with considerable rage: it would provoke a reaction like that of Pinochet, they feared. In the meantime, they took particular exception to the pretensions of people they described as pseudo-intellectuals, by which apparently they meant, plebian intellectuals now occupying important posts. My hosts' revolution was meant to be political, not social. They were certainly devoted to political liberty, but they were disinclined to see their own cultural and economic advantages diminished. I experienced a twinge of identification: in sharper and more serious compass, they were dealing with what the rest of us had to face during the upsurge of the new left. The maid who served lunch was considerably shorter than her employers: class and nutrition go together in Southern Europe. An adolescent son made sardonic comments and went off to watch television (which was showing American films). My hosts denounced the revolution for attempting to subvert what they termed the "healthy" values of the northern rural population. It was just that population which later erupted in mob violence. When I left, I had the impression of having played a minor part in a scene by Bunuel.

Later I went to a meeting of workers in the rubber industry. Some of the enterprises had been expropriated, all were near bankruptcy. The workers had taken charge. Or had they? The meeting seemed to have been prepared by a union official and by someone from the Movement of the Armed Forces. The workers did speak, but TV crews were present. I could not avoid the feeling that parts of the meeting had been staged. Other visits elsewhere did convince me that spontaneous worker action was real enough—a lot of it in white collar segments of the economy like the airline, TAP, and the banks.

In general, the efforts of the Communist Party and the Movement of the Armed Forces to mobilize the population seem to have failed. Those segments of the population which are aroused simply do not follow the official revolutionary line, insofar as one can be discerned. There are two large blocs on their right. One is a traditional right, based on the peasantry in the north and the middle classes in the south, ready for a restoration under Spinola. There are also the democrats and moderates around Soares and his allies in the armed forces (like Antunes, the Foreign Minister). This group hasn't been disinclined to use the traditional (really, fascist) right to oppose the Communists and the Movement of the Armed Forces. The strategy may have been necessary, but it may yet prove extremely dangerous to the democratic goals of the

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moderates. The Communists have seized positions of strength in the unions, the media, administration—but these are now being contested in the name of fair apportionment after the election. The Communists, their ally Goncalves evicted as Prime Minister, are now badly shaken. They have reason to be. Their claim to represent revolutionary purity is contested, with real force, by the leftist groups who are so active among the armed forces, the workers, and the intelligentsia.

What accounts for this sort of revolutionary effervescence where it might least have been expected? Years of Stalinism in Eastern Europe and Social Democracy in Western Europe have convinced thousands of Portuguese that there must be a more authentic and effective path to revolution. Revolution is as revolution does: it ought to begin at the bottom and transform society immediately. I have said that the revolutionary officers lacked political experience. The old constraints gone, thousands of Portuguese with socialist sympathies find themselves without a formed national tradition of socialism—there is not even one to rebel against. The very small numerical strength of the ultraleftists, then, is entirely disproportionate to their ideological power. Through their pressure on the Socialist and Communist Parties, through their adherents in the ranks (and sometimes the officers' corps) of the armed forces, they substitute for the missing conscience of a revolution which has as yet to find itself. They are, last but not least, a continuous presence in Lisbon's streets.

Since my visit, the lack of cohesion of the revolutionary alliance and of the military, the incapacity of the Communists to alter a course set for disaster, the incompetence of the government, and the economic sanctions applied by the Common Market have done their work. The eruptions in the north threatened a counterrevolution. The Communists and the left formed an ephemeral alliance to defend the government of Goncalves, but that fell apart. The leftists and the moderates then united long enough to push Goncalves out, but not firmly enough to make sure that his successors can stay in. The left and the Communists are allied, again, in resisting the new government's efforts to impose its authority. They may succeed only in provoking the counterrevolution they so fear. The struggle for the control of the media has had the unintended but positive consequence of assuring a diversity of news and opinion. Reports of a Communist stranglehold on the press were in any case exaggerated. The Socialists and the moderates always had their papers, much more widely read and trusted than those edited by Cunhal's cadres. The Communists did dominate radio and television, but the new government has wisely set out to weaken their hold.

It is, quite simply, impossible to predict the outcome of the Portuguese revolution. For the time being, the moderates and their allies in the armed

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forces have obliged the faltering Movement of the Armed Forces to take public opinion more seriously. (I am reminded of the headline in *Jornal Nove* when I was there: "Please! The Movement of the Armed Forces Asks the People to be Good Enough to Make the Revolution.") But that opinion is deeply divided, and authority—even revolutionary authority—seems nowhere to be found. Soares and the Socialists have reaffirmed their commitment to the socialization of large-scale property, but this has not satisfied the left. The real difference between them is the Socialists' insistence on parliamentary socialism; the left is Leninist. The stabilization of the revolution, the consolidation of its political and economic gains, seems remote. There is an advantage to the confusion, oscillation and division: if no one force can emerge triumphant, a revolutionary pluralism of a de facto kind, an uneasy coexistence of tendencies, may consolidate itself. That, in turn, presupposes a relatively benign international setting—by no means assured. Soares would do well to ask his friends in Western Europe to give economic aid to Portugal. The rest of us would do well to cease regarding him as a Pericles reborn. His struggle for democratic freedoms is admirable, but it would be more effective had he not accepted indirect subventions from the CIA and were his party less rhetorical and more political. Instead of complaining that it is not being listened to, it might do more work at the base in the unions and the armed forces. Does anyone really care for Portugal, or must it function as a political puppet theater? My most poignant memory of Portugal was of a ragtag demonstration of leftists in Lisbon's streets: workers, some relatively threadbare office workers, soldiers, students. Their placards declared that the great powers were conspiring to turn Portugal into the theater of an international civil war. *Nem Praha Nem Chile.* ("Neither Prague Nor Chile.")

The words speak for half a continent. Northern European Social Democracy and Latin socialism, revisionist Communism and new forms of leftism, are agreed on this. The old continent's new ideas may never come to fruition. They require a protected geopolitical space in which to grow. Circumstances, above all the economic crisis, may preclude much social experimentation in Europe. If, however, Western Europe cannot devise new social forms—it is difficult to see who else will.

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Přemysl Dvořák

THE ART OF LIVING IN A SUBJUGATED COUNTRY

The article reprinted below was smuggled out of Czechoslovakia earlier this year by one of the underground groups which together form a loose movement known as Czechoslovak Socialist Opposition (CSO). The author correctly states that there is no opposition party in Czechoslovakia or even the possibility of protesting publicly against the wide-spread injustices, but—perhaps because of that—many people have decided to resort to what the regime labels "illegal means" of opposing the government's policies and keeping alive the hope of restoring freedom and socialism. Opposition groups vary in tactics, strategy, and politics. They range from intellectual groups to workers' collectives, from pro-Dubcek Communist reformists and groups which the Westerners would label as left-wing social democrats to various shades of the East European New Left. But, despite their differences, they are united by their opposition to the present power-hungry regime and by their desire to help create a country whose present and future will be decided by the majority of its inhabitants and by them alone. That is why they are prepared to cooperate with each other under the umbrella heading of CSO.

Many people would agree with Premysl Dvorak that to help hundreds of thousands of Czechs and Slovaks who are the everyday target of nonjudicial persecution, only one way, at present, exists: publicity for their plight; publicity which would embarrass the Czechoslovak Communist Party inside the world Communist movement. For many West European Communist Parties, attempting to assert their independence and striving for mass support in their own countries, Czechoslovak puppet, neo-Stalinist, repressive rulers are a sore point they wish would go away.

—Michael David

When the Czech student leader, Jiri Muller, returned from a student holiday brigade abroad in the summer of 1968, friends back home in Czechoslovakia asked him why he had returned to an occupied country, one from which many people were emigrating. Jiri thought for a moment, smiled, and

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in his calm, unassuming way replied: "Someone had to be here who will say no."

Jiri Muller was only twenty-five then, but he thought and acted in a way that we appreciate more and more as time goes on. He was convicted in July, 1972, for "subversion of the republic" and sentenced to five-and-a-half years imprisonment. By "subversion" the prosecutor and the judge meant the distribution of thousands of leaflets explaining to citizens their constitutional right not to vote for the government's candidates and the distribution of clandestinely produced information broadsheets and some literature smuggled from abroad. He was also alleged to have handled the most dangerous weapon of all—a duplicator.

When Soviet troops with the aid of the armies of the five so-called allied states occupied Czechoslovakia, the very existence of our country appeared to be threatened. Today this danger seems to have passed. Today it is simply our soul, our culture, and our honor which are at stake. The fundamental issue is a moral issue, a question of conscience; Jiri's fate and attitude embody the answer to this question. His response, his ethical standpoint, is of inestimable value and is sharply focused against the prevailing social pressure, humiliation, and injustice.

The Prague Spring of 1968 represented political liberalization "from above" matched by an awakening of the population's desire for a free, humane, democratic, and socially just society. For twenty years this longing had been suppressed; when the chance came, it burst forth in a spontaneous cathartic wave.

This brief season of freedom gave us insight into ourselves and moral strength. Citizens thus armed are not easily dictated to. The leaders who were installed by the occupying power, and who are now trying to rule us, are compelled to govern by force; they have to break us morally. Their system of reward and punishment is back to front: immoral behavior is rewarded, loyalty to conscience is punished—and so is mere silence.

The system works like this: rewards are given for demonstrating loyalty to the regime, for dissociating oneself from protestors, or alleged protestors, for criticizing one's previous attitudes—that is, publicly recanting one's convictions—for joining the Communist Party, the Youth Union, or the Society of Friends of the Soviet Union. One would like to say that punishments are given for the opposite: for protesting in public, for joining the opposition party; but can one do anything like that in Czechoslovakia? Not only have we no opposition party, we have no organization at all with the status of a political party. And how can one mount a public protest? No protest would get through to the newspapers. One could make an outcry to a few dozen people in the street or at a meeting, but that would be the end of it, and the end of

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the protestor's civil freedom as well. Under a totalitarian regime, traditional (and any kind of) democracy is powerless.

One can be penalized for not joining the organizations referred to, for not demonstrating loyalty, for not disavowing one's convictions and one's friends, for having a parent, a wife, or a husband who is regarded as an enemy of the regime.

The degree of merit and guilt is scaled, and the rewards and punishments are graded accordingly, the latter being more highly differentiated. A scientific worker is rewarded with a higher post or scientific title, an artist is given the opportunity to exhibit his work, a writer to publish his books, have his plays performed, a composer to have his music played in concert halls or on the radio. A works functionary may be given a free flat by the state (the housing shortage continues to be acute), a member of the Youth Union will have the dream of all youth fulfilled—to go abroad for vacations. There is no need to enumerate the privileges enjoyed by CP members; these are found in all spheres of life. One can see that conditions which in most other countries are a natural part of life are, in Czechoslovakia, rewards for political reliability.

And what about punishments for the unyielding? "Perpetuum silentium" for writers, journalists, and artists. Obstacles at work, dismissal, premature retirement for scientific workers. A travel ban, unemployment, or menial, soul-destroying jobs for the unreliable intelligentsia. Imprisonment for overzealous priests and for those who protest publicly. And worse still, revenge is taken on the children of the intractable or insufficiently active.

The present regime has succeeded in creating a reliable system of control. Modern society is usually described as atomized; it lacks the stability and complexity of interrelations of former societies and, therefore, natural social control. This deficiency is counteracted in Czechoslovakia by a specific invention: the cadre system. Dossiers are kept on every citizen from childhood. The child's family background is noted, whether he takes part in voluntary community work, collects salvage, recites Russian poems at official celebrations, offers his services as a guard of honor at memorials to the Red Army, joins the Pioneer organization, the Socialist Youth Union; whether he comports himself in a "politically conscious" way in his free time; whether he attends church or religious instruction, and so on.

These records accompany one from school to school, from employer to employer, or rather from cadre officer to cadre officer. The notes accumulate and include the political profile of one's wife and comments on one's behavior in this or that political situation. These records are secret, one does not know who has written what in them; one has no chance to defend oneself or to explain possible errors (and such errors can be fatal).

Suitability for a job is gauged on the basis of this cadre material, as is

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a child's suitability for enrollment at a secondary school or university. Children applying for a place at a school are judged on the basis of their parents' political loyalty, with top marks given for membership of one or both parents in the CP. Important also are the child's own political activities. Academic achievement, talent, intelligence are secondary considerations. If a child's parents have been classified among the less tractable citizens, even an IQ bordering on genius is of no avail, and the child is condemned to soul-destroying menial labor.

Let there be no mistake, this is not the class justice of the postrevolutionary period which was aimed at restituting social injustice and providing education to the children of the oppressed classes. The children who are now being refused admission to secondary schools were born to a generation who had passed through the sifting process; the "family of the intelligentsia" origin ought not to be a handicap; on the contrary, it should indicate the grandparents' blameless class origin. The motive behind this sifting is not the desire to achieve justice but the desire to rule. The rulers have discovered our weak spot. A man is willing to risk his own future, he can endure a lot himself: loss of freedom, loss of means of existence, loss of communication with friends. But few are willing to let their children suffer, to deny them the education they want and which ranks high in the parents' own hierarchy of values. So the generation which resolved to endure lends itself to manipulation in its children's interests.

"Why do we not defend ourselves?" others may ask. The answer is: we do defend ourselves, each on his own behalf and in his own way. We have been deprived of freedom of assembly and of the press, the basic weapons of a cultural community. Our nation, which rose almost from the dead in the last century, saved itself from Germanization—thanks to its teachers and priests; a nation that arrived at the purifying ideas of the Reformation a hundred years before the rest of Europe; a nation whose whole history has been one of resistance to violence, an expression of ethical endeavor; the nation of Hus, Comenius, and Masaryk; this nation is now forcibly deprived of those who have always been its spokesmen and its fount of ideas: artists, publicists, social critics, and scientists. Several generations absorbed in creative endeavor have been scattered about the world, silenced at home. A nation which discovered, created, and defended ethical and cultural values is now robbed of the possibility of creating culture and is forced to act in contradiction to its traditions.

How should we defend ourselves? We have no forum for protest, no platform. But we do defend ourselves for the time being, at least, by continuing to exist, and through the presence of people like Jiri Muller who know how to say no. The price we have to pay makes us value certain things, perhaps

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more than the freer world: true friendship, solidarity, the nobility of anonymous mutual help, the spontaneous formation of natural groups among people who see they can trust each other. These assets are unknown to those who are trying to govern us.

We are grieved by the conditions of Jiri Muller and the other political prisoners. Cut off from our expressions of sympathy, they meet only with hostility and insults and find support only in the strength of their own characters. Our prisons are a logical end product of our system: its characteristics extended to an absurd degree. Our whole system is based not on social justice and socialism but on the efforts of our leaders to remain in power. Prison is intended not to change the convictions of political offenders and reeducate them, but to break them. Prison is an instrument of revenge on political opponents. Whereas in civilian society our leaders try to disguise their intentions in social demagogy, their attitude toward political opponents is openly cynical.

Here one might expect to read a list of horrors and tortures as described by Solzhenitsyn. We have nothing like that at our disposal. The antidemocratic system of silence, concealment, atomization of society, absence of communication between individual sections has achieved its end: prison for political offenders is a world unto itself about which the rest of the population has, and is allowed to have, no idea. The majority of the population does not know how many scores, hundreds, or thousands of persons have been imprisoned for their convictions and in what conditions they and their families are living.

Nevertheless, scattered pieces of information do penetrate the prison walls. Compared with the Gulag of the Byzantine empire, the methods of torturing people in our country are less primitive and ostentatious. One could apply the Western term, mental cruelty. Our political prisoners are kept for years in isolation, in a cell with one or, at the most, two fellow prisoners. They are not allowed to contact anyone else even when taken to the yard for exercise. Their only contact with the outside world is the four annual visits by members of their family, who often cannot find money enough to make the trip, and one four-page letter per week (to one family at one address). It is up to the "organ" to decide what a political prisoner may write and read in a letter. He and his family are not allowed to write about philosophy, religion, ethics, politics; they may not insert pressed flowers, quote poetry, or even mention the names of authors if they are Czech. A prisoner may keep only one letter, the last.

All prisoners do hard work which is usually harmful to their health, but the political prisoners do not even have a change of surroundings; they work in their cells, and their norms are particularly hard. In every way their condi-

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tions are worse than those for thieves and murderers. If a political prisoner does not fulfill his norm—that is, his waking hours do not suffice for fulfilling the daily task—he does not receive any pocket money. This is a hard punishment because it means he cannot purchase at the prison canteen the vitamins which prison food lacks. He grows physically weaker and his output declines. He is allowed to receive a parcel from home four times a year during the visits. It may not weigh more than five pounds and usually holds only enough onions and garlic to keep him in vitamins for the three intervening months.

Members of prisoners' families are kept under surveillance. Sympathy towards prisoners' families, or financial assistance to a family deprived of the main breadwinner, is classified as "approving a penal act," and the sympathizer can be prosecuted. Lawyers who defend political prisoners are restricted in their own civil rights; they are not permitted to travel abroad on the ground that they have "come in contact with State secrets and could betray them."

It seems our prison system does not threaten the life of the prisoner; "only" his health, both physical and mental, and his honor are affected. But there is no guarantee that there will not be a turn for the worse. An antidemocratic, uncontrollable system gives no guarantee that the worst may not happen, simply as the result of private initiative by an "organ." A recent report is a tragic warning: on July 17 [1974] Mr. Kosinka of Nove Mesto in Moravia, a priest of the Czechoslovak church of Jan Hus, died after several weeks in custody. The reason for his arrest is not known. We only know that he criticized state oppression of the church. The autopsy revealed several injuries and gave as the direct cause of death a broken neck. The report added an unusual postscript: death was caused by a fall downstairs.

We shall probably never know the truth. And who knows whether there will not be further cases? We live in a society deprived of legal security. Methods of treating citizens and prisoners are not determined by law but by seasonal trends, according to the international situation, according to Moscow's wishes, according to changing instructions from above. Instructions are given and batons are wielded; different instructions are given and a tough opponent, if he is well known, is "only" driven into exile.

This brings us to the system's weak spot. It fears a scandal abroad. People who are well known in the free world, who are talked about abroad, enjoy relative immunity. The leading politicians of the Prague Spring of 1968 are not in prison, they are only isolated from the rest of the population and are libeled and insulted. But hundreds of other citizens, less known or unknown, are imprisoned. This is a further proof that our leaders are not interested in justice, in however distorted a form, but only in maintaining their positions of power. They do not dare to touch the great among their opponents, but take their revenge on the humble, because the world does not know about the

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humble and the example of their punishment is enough to intimidate others.

Rhetoric and pathos in politics goes against our grain. We do not want to appeal to irrational passions. We know too that a humanistic society grows from native roots; it cannot be imported as a gift. Therefore we do not launch dramatic appeals for help. On the other hand, we know that just as we were trampled on from outside, the destructive process may be curbed from outside.

We should like to think that the world has not forgotten us. We should like to think that young people brought up with pure ideals have included us in their list of small countries unjustly treated by the great powers. We should like to think that friends among the intellectuals all over the world are reflecting on our fate, for their own sakes as well as ours. The world is morally indivisible; if injustice is perpetrated at one end of the world, it is an unjust world. Cultural values are also common to all. Even the cultural legacy of nations who have perished long ago is regarded as universal, something of which the whole of mankind is proud. If a national culture is destroyed, it is a loss for the whole world.

However, this has not happened yet. Our fate is still in the balance. We ourselves have some say by continuing to exist unchanged, but our fate will also be decided by the rest of the world, by its influence on the policy of the great powers. By deciding our fate, the world is deciding its own fate and deciding what kind of world we shall live in; the struggle for goodness and justice concerns mankind; we are only one of the unhappy countries that bear the burden of this struggle.

Jiri Muller replies on our behalf to the major question of our time, the question of conscience; we too, we citizens of an occupied country, are endeavoring to reply to the best of our ability on behalf of the whole world.

Prague, Autumn 1974

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Michel Foucault

WHAT IS AN AUTHOR?

Obviously, I must provide some justification for the subject I have chosen: "What is an author?"

First, I have decided to treat this slightly unusual question because I want to make a critical reassessment of something I wrote some time ago and to return to a number of imprudent mistakes I have made. In *The Order of Things*, I tried to analyze texts lacking the usual unities of book, oeuvre, and author. I spoke in general of "natural history," or of the "analysis of wealth," or of "political economy," but not of works or of writers. However, throughout that study, I made naive (that is to say crude) use of authors' names. I spoke of Buffon, of de Cuvier, of Ricardo with an embarrassing ambiguity. So much so that two kinds of objections were legitimately raised. I was told: "You do not describe Buffon in the right way, nor the totality of his work, and what you say of Marx is ridiculously insufficient in relation to his thought." These objections were evidently based on fact, but I do not think that they were completely relevant to what I was doing. For me, the problem was not to describe Buffon or Marx, nor to reconstruct what they said or meant: I was simply trying to find the rules by which they had formulated the concepts and theories encountered in their texts. Another objection was also made: "You create," I was told, "unlikely juxtapositions, you bring together names so obviously opposed to each other as those of Buffon and Linnaeus, you put Cuvier beside Darwin, and this in opposition to the most recognizable affinities and natural resemblances." Here again, I would say that the objection does not seem appropriate because I never sought to construct a genealogical table of intellectual originality, and I never wanted to compose an intellectual portrait of the scientist or the naturalist of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; nor did I want to construct any family, either holy or unholy. I was simply trying something more modest—to examine certain discursive practices.

"Then," you ask me, "why use the names of authors in *The Order of Things*? Either don't use any, or define the way in which you make use of

NOTE: "What is an Author" was originally presented before La Société Française de Philosophie and appears here in a slightly abridged form.

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them.' This objection, I think, is perfectly justified, and I have tried to measure its implications and consequences in a study which will soon appear.*

But, another question comes up, the question of the author, and it is this question I wish to discuss now. The notion of the author constitutes a strong moment of individualization in the history of ideas, knowledge, and literature, as well as in the history of philosophy and science. Even today, when one writes the history of a concept, of a literary genre, or of a school of philosophy, I think one regards these as secondary and superimposed on the fundamental unity which is that of the author of the work.

I will not go into the socio-historical analysis of the figure of the author. How the author is individualized in a culture such as ours, his status, the system of values in which he is accepted, at what moment one begins to write the lives not of heroes, but of authors, how that fundamental category of criticism, "the man and the work," is established—all of these questions merit analysis. But I would like now to consider the relationship of the text to the author, who, in appearance at least, is exterior and anterior to it.

For the theme from which I take my point of departure, I borrow a formulation from Beckett: "What difference does it make who is speaking, someone said, what difference does it make?" I think we must recognize in this indifference one of the fundamental ethical principles of contemporary writing. I say "ethical" because this indifference is not so much characteristic of the manner in which one speaks or writes; it is, rather, a sort of immanent rule, which is endlessly repeated yet never completely applied, a principle which does not characterize writing as a product, but which dominates it as a practice. This rule is too well known to analyze at length; it should be sufficient here to specify it by referring to two large themes. First, one can say that writing today has freed itself of the theme of expression: it refers only to itself. Writing reveals itself as a game which inevitably goes beyond its rules and thus passes outside itself. What counts is not the demonstrativeness or the enthusiasm in the act of writing; it is not a question of pinning down a subject in language; it is a question of opening up a space where the subject continually disappears.

The second theme is even more familiar; it is writing's engendering of death. This relationship reverses an old theme: the narrative and epic poetry of the Greeks created the immortality of the hero, and if the hero welcomed an early death, it was so that his life, thus consecrated and magnified by death, might be immortalized. In another way, Arabic narrative—I am thinking of the *Arabian Nights*—also had the avoidance of death as its motivation, theme, and pretext: they told their stories until the small hours of the morning to avert death, to put off that final accounting that would silence the

*The Archaeology of Knowledge. Pantheon Books.

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narrator forever. Scheherazade's recitation is the stubborn opposite of murder—it is the attempt made every night to keep death outside the circle of existence. This theme of story-telling or writing which conjures away death has been transformed by our culture. Writing is now tied to sacrifice, even to the sacrifice of life; a voluntary obliteration which has not been represented in the books, because it is accomplished in the very life of the writer. The work, which originally had the task of conferring immortality, has now the right to kill, to be the murderer of its author. Thus, Flaubert, Proust, Kafka. Moreover, the affinity of writing for death also manifests itself in the obliteration of the character of the writer. All this is well known, and it is about time that criticism and philosophy acknowledged the disappearance or the death of the author.

I am not sure, however, that we have rigorously drawn all the conclusions implied by this death, nor that we have assessed the full import of this event. More precisely, it seems to me that a number of notions obstruct this process and avoid what must be clarified. I will simply treat two of them.

First, the notion of the work. It is said (and it is still a very familiar thesis) that the proper role of criticism is not to untangle the connection between the work and the author, nor to try to reconstruct a thought or an experience through the text. Rather, criticism must analyze the work in its structure, in its architecture, in its intrinsic form, and in the interaction of its internal relations. But, a problem must be raised: What is a work? What is that curious unity which one designates under the name of the work? Of what elements is it composed? Is not a work something that has been written by someone who is an author? One perceives the increasing difficulties. If an individual is not an author, can one say that what he has written, or said, what he has left behind in his papers, what one can recount of his remarks, could be called a work? Inasmuch as Sade was not an author, what are the rolls of paper upon which he poured out his endless fantasies during his days in prison?

But let us suppose that one is dealing with an author: Is everything that he wrote or said, everything that he left behind him, to be regarded as part of his oeuvre? It is both a theoretical and a technical problem. For example, when one undertakes the publication of Nietzsche's complete works, where must one stop? One must publish everything, of course, but what is meant by everything? All that Nietzsche himself published, of course. The rough drafts of his works? Obviously. The Aphoristic projects? Yes. The crossings out? Also. But, when in the middle of a notebook filled with aphorisms one finds a reference, the notation of a rendezvous or an address, a laundry stub: oeuvre or not? But why not? And so on, ad infinitum. Among the millions of trails left behind by someone after his death, how can one define the work? The

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theory of the work does not exist, so that lacking such a theory, those who ingeniously attempt to compile an edition of collected works soon find their undertaking stymied. And one can carry this farther, too: Can it be said that the *Arabian Nights*, the *Stromatus* of Clement of Alexandria, or the *Vices* of Diogenes Laertus constitute a complete work? One perceives the multitude of questions that arises over the notion of the complete work. So it is not enough to say "Let's do without the writer, let's do without the author, and let's study the work itself." The word "work" and the unity it designates are probably as problematic as the individuality of the author.

Another notion conceals the author's disappearance and preserves his existence. This is the notion of writing. In a strict sense, this notion should not only permit the abandonment of all reference to the author, it should also give new status to his absence. It is not a question of either the act of writing or of what someone meant; one is forced to think of the general condition of the entire text, of the space where it is dispersed, and of the time in which it unfolds.

I wonder if, reduced as it is to current usage, this notion does not transpose the empirical character of the author into a transcendental anonymity. One is willing to erase the signs of the existence of the author which are too visible, by putting into play, both parallel and in opposition to each other, two kinds of characterization: the critical mode and the religious mode. Does not the representation of writing as an absence simply repeat in transcendental terms the religious principle that tradition is at once unalterable and never complete, and the aesthetic principle of the survival of the work, its endurance despite death?

* * *

But it is obviously not sufficient to repeat the empty affirmation of the author's disappearance. Nor is it enough to repeat ad nauseam that God and man suffer the same death. What must be done is to trace a path through the space thus opened by the disappearance of the author, and to examine the new functions to which this disappearance has given rise.

First, I would like to allude briefly to the problems raised by the author's name. What is the author's name? And how does it function? Far from providing a solution I will only indicate several of the difficulties raised by this question.

The author's name is a proper name and poses the same problems as all proper names. It is obviously not possible to make a pure and simple reference with a proper name. The proper name (like the author's name) has other indicative functions. It is more than a finger pointing to someone; to some

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extent it is equivalent to a description. When one says "Aristotle" one employs a word which is equivalent to a precise description, like "the author of the *Analytics*" or "the founder of ontology." But one cannot limit oneself to this. A proper name has a complicated meaning; when one discovers that Rimbaud did not write "La Chasse Spirituelle" one cannot claim that this proper name or that of the author have changed meaning. The proper name and the author's name are situated between the two poles of description and designation; they are connected to what they name, but neither completely in the mode of designation, nor completely in the mode of description. However—and it is here that the particular difficulties of the author's name arise—the connection of the proper name with the individual named, and the connection of the author's name with what it names, are not isomorphic. Here are some of the difficulties.

If I observe, for example, that Pierre Dupont does not have blue eyes, or was not born in Paris, or is not a doctor, nonetheless, this name, Pierre Dupont, will continue to refer to the same person. But the problems posed by the name of an author are more complex: if I discover that Shakespeare was not born in the house which one visits today, this obviously is not going to alter the function of the author's name; but if someone proves that Shakespeare did not write the sonnets which pass as his, that is a change of another kind, one that affects the function of the author's name. And, if someone proved that Shakespeare had written Bacon's *Novum Organum* simply because the same author wrote the works of both Shakespeare and Bacon, that, too, is a change which completely modifies the function of the author's name. The author's name, therefore, is not exactly a proper name like any other.

Many other facts draw our attention to the paradoxical singularity of the author's name. One cannot say that Pierre Dupont does not exist in the same way that one can say that Homer or Hermes Trimestigus did not exist: in one case, we mean that no one bears the name of Pierre Dupont; in the other that several authors have been grouped under a single name, but that the real author does not have any of the traits attributed to the figure of Homer or Hermes. Nor is it the same thing to say that the real name of X is not Pierre Dupont but Jacques Durand, and that Stendahl's name was Henri Beyle. One could also question the meaning and function of a statement like "Bourbaki is so and so," and "Victor Eremita, Climacus, Anticlimacus, Frater Taciturnus, Constantin Constantius are Kierkegaard."

Perhaps we owe these differences to the following fact: the author's name is not simply a subject or predicate which can be replaced by a pronoun. The author's name plays a certain role in any discourse: it assumes a classificatory function; it allows us to group together a number of texts, to delimit them, to exclude others, and to contrast them with others. The fact of having

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an author's name, the fact that one can say "this has been written by a certain person" or "a certain person is its author" indicates that the author's name is not an ordinary proper noun, but one which must be received in a certain mode, and which, in a given culture, must be accorded a certain status.

Finally, one comes to the conclusion that the author's name does not refer to a real person but that it exceeds the limits of the texts, that it organizes them, that it reveals their mode of being, or at least characterizes them. Though it clearly points to the existence of certain texts, it also refers to their status within a society and within a culture. As a result, one could say that in a civilization like our own there are a certain number of discourses which require the function of an author whereas there are others which are deprived of this function. A private letter certainly bears a signature, but it does not have an author; a contract certainly has a signer, but it does not have an author; an anonymous text which one can read on a wall in the street has a creator, but it will not have an author. The function of the author is thus characteristic of the mode of existence, circulation, and operation of certain discourses within a society.

* * *

In our culture, how do we characterize a discourse which has this function of authorship? In what way is it contrasted with other discourses?

First of all, the author is an object of assimilation. Texts, books, discourse, really began to have authors (other than mythic personages or sanctified and sanctifying figures) to the degree to which the author could be punished. Historically, discourse was a gesture charged with risks before it became a commodity included in the general circulation of property. When regulation as property was established for texts—at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries—through the enactment of strict rules governing the rights of the author, the relationship between authors and editors, and the rights of production, the possibility of breaking the law through the act of writing assumed the aspect of a literary imperative. From the moment he was placed within the system of property which characterizes our society, the author compensated for his new status by systematically engaging in violations, by restoring the original danger to writing.

Second, the function of authorship is not exercised over all discourses. In our civilization, the same texts did not always require an attribution. There was a time when those texts we call literary (narratives, epic poems, tragedies, comedies) were received, circulated, and evaluated without the question of their authorship being raised; their anonymity presented no difficulty, their ancientness, real or supposed, was a sufficient guarantee. On the other hand,

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the texts which we now call scientific, concerning cosmology, medicine, the natural sciences, and geography, were not accepted during the Middle Ages and did not have any validity unless they were credited to an author. "Hippocrates said," "Pliny relates," were not just formulations of the argument of authority; they were the signs with which discourses intended to be received as proofs were marked. But sometime in the eighteenth or nineteenth century scientific discourses began to be accepted for themselves, anonymously, either as established truth, or as capable of demonstration; their adherence to systematic knowledge became their guarantee, without reference to the individual who produced them. The function of authorship was effaced. But now the literary discourses cannot be accepted unless endowed with authorship: of every poetic or fictional text it will be asked—Where did it come from? Who wrote it? When? Under what circumstances? As part of what project? The meaning that is given, its status or value, depends on the way these questions are answered. And if, as the result of accident, or through the explicit wishes of the author, the texts come to us anonymously, it immediately becomes a question of finding an author for them. We cannot tolerate literary anonymity. We do not welcome its enigmatic quality.

Third, authorship is not simply the attribution of a work to an individual. It is the result of a complex operation which creates a rational being called the author (for whom writing would be the product of a "profound" urgency, a "creative" capacity, a "design"). Without doubt, one tries to give him a real status. But, in fact, what is designated as the author is always only the projection onto the texts, in more or less psychological terms, of the traits, connections, continuities, and exclusions one establishes. All these operations vary according to the epoch and the type of discourse. Philosophical authors are not put together like poets; and the author of a romantic work in the eighteenth century is not constructed in the same way as one in our time.

For example, it seems to me that the way in which literary criticism has defined the author for a long time—or, rather, has constructed the form of authorship from existing texts—really is derived directly from the manner in which Christian tradition authenticated (or rejected) the texts it had at its command. In other words, to find the author in the work, modern criticism uses methods similar to those of Christian exegesis when it demonstrated the value of a text by the holiness of the author. In *The Lives of Famous Men*, Saint Jerome explained that homonymy was not sufficient to identify the authors of several works legitimately: different individuals could bear the same name, or one could borrow the patronymic of another. Saint Jerome gives four criteria for determining authorship: if among several books attributed to the same author, one is inferior to the others, it must be withdrawn from the list of his works (definition of the author according to a certain con-

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stant level of quality); similarly, if certain texts are in doctrinal contradiction with the other works of the author, they must be withdrawn (definition of the author according to conceptual coherence); similarly, one must exclude works which are written in a different style (definition of the author as a stylistic unity); finally, one must consider as interpolated those texts which cite events or personalities after the death of the author (definition of the author as a historical moment and as the point of encounter of specific events). But modern literary criticism, even when it does not have the problem of authentication (which is the general rule), hardly defines the author differently: the author is the one who explains the presence of certain events in a work, as well as their transformation and their diverse modifications (and this by the biography of the author, the delineation of his individual perspective, the analysis of his social affiliation, or of his class origin, or the clarification of his basic intention). The author is equally the principle of a certain unity of writing. The author is the one who permits the reconciliation of contradictions arising in a series of texts; he must have at some level of his thought a point of departure from which the incompatible elements are finally linked to each other or are organized around a fundamental, original contradiction. Finally, the author is a nucleus of expression which, in more or less perfected forms, is evident in all his works, his rough drafts, his letters, and fragments.

But the notion of authorship is not a reconstruction made pure and simple at one remove from a given text. The text always carries in itself a number of signs which point to the author. These signs are well-known to grammarians: they are the personal pronouns, adverbs of time and place, the conjugation of verbs. But it must be noted that these elements do not work in the same way in discourses provided with authorship as in those which are deprived of it. In the latter, certain connectives refer to the real speaker and to the space-time coordinates of his discourse (except when one narrates a discourse in the first person). In the former, however, their role is more complex and variable. It is well-known that in a novel in the first person, the signs of localization do not always refer exactly to the writer nor to the moment in which he wrote. It would be as wrong to seek the author on the side of the real writer as on the side of the fictional speaker; the function of the author is realized in the split between the two. One would say, perhaps, that this is solely a singular property of romantic or poetic discourse. In fact, all discourses which are provided with authorship admit of this plurality of ego. The ego in the preface of a mathematical treatise, which indicates the circumstances of its composition, is not identical with the ego in a demonstration which appears as "I conclude" or "I suppose." In one case, the "I" refers to the unique individual who completed a specific work in a given place and time; in the second case, the "I" designates a ground and a moment of demonstration which every indi-

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vidual can occupy provided that he has accepted the same symbols, the same axioms. But one could also locate a third ego in the same treatise; the one which explains the meaning of the work, the obstacles encountered, the results obtained, the problems which remain, and this ego is situated in the field of mathematical discourses which already exist or which are to come. In certain discourses, however, the author plays a role which occasions the release of the three egos simultaneously.

* * *

I am aware that I have limited my theme. Certainly, one should also mention the role of the author in painting, in music, in technology. However, even supposing that one keeps to the world of discourse, as I have wanted to, I think that I have given the term author much too narrow a meaning. I have limited myself to the author understood as the author of a text, a book, or a work whose production one can legitimately attribute to him. But it is easy to see that one can be the author of more than a book—of a theory, of a tradition, of a discipline within which other books or authors are going to take their places. I would say that these authors find themselves, in a word, in a "transdiscursive" position.

This is a recurrent phenomenon—certainly as old as our civilization. Homer, Aristotle, the Church Fathers, all played this role; but so did the first mathematicians, and those who established the Hippocratic tradition. But it seems to me that we have witnessed during the course of the nineteenth century the appearance of quite unique authors who cannot be identified with the great literary authors, nor with the founders of the sciences. Let us call these, in a somewhat arbitrary fashion, the founders of discursivity.

These authors have this peculiarity; they are not solely the authors of works, of books. They have produced something more: the possibilities and the rules for the formation of other texts. In this sense, they are very different, for example, from the author of novels who is never, in the end, anything other than the author of his own text. Freud is not simply the author of *The Interpretation of Dreams* or of *Wit and the Unconscious.* Marx is not simply the author of "The Communist Manifesto" or *Capital.* Both Freud and Marx have established a possibility for further discourse. Obviously, it is easy to raise an objection. It is not true that the author of a novel is nothing more than the author of his own text; in a sense, he, too, regulates and controls more than that. To take a simple example, one can say that Ann Radcliffe not only wrote *The Castle of the Pyrenees* and a number of other novels, but that she made possible the gothic novel at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and to that extent her function as an author exceeded her own work. But the possi-

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bilities created by the initiators of a discursivity (I take Marx and Freud as examples because I believe they are both the first and the most important) are completely different from the possibilities created by the author of a novel. Ann Radcliffe's texts served as a model for other works. To say that Ann Radcliffe founded the gothic novel of the nineteenth century means that one will find in that genre the theme of the heroine caught in her own innocence, the symbol of the secret castle which functions as an anti-city, the figure of the dark, doomed hero who vows to make the world pay for the evil he has endured, and so on. But Freud and Marx have opened the field to something besides themselves, yet belonging to what they established. To say that Freud founded psychoanalysis does not simply mean that one finds the concept of the libido or the technique of dream analysis in the work of Karl Abraham or Melanie Klein. Freud created the possibility of a number of divergences from his own ideas, all of which enhance the entire field of psychoanalysis.

At the same time, there is a new problem. After all, Galileo did not simply make possible those who repeated the laws he formulated, he made possible pronouncements quite different from his own. If Cuviet is the founder of biology, or Saussure of linguistics, it is not because they have been imitated, it is not because someone has incorporated the concept of the organism or of the sign; it is because, to some extent, Cuvier made possible the theory of evolution which was opposed to his own nonevolutionary thought; it is because, to a certain degree, Saussure made possible a generative grammar which is very different from his structural analyses.

As distinguished from the founding of a "scientificity," the inauguration of a "discursivity" does not take part in subsequent transformations; it remains necessarily above and beyond them. The result is that one defines the validity of a proposition by reference to the work of these initiators, whereas in the case of Galileo or Newton, it is by reference to the structure of physics and cosmology that one can affirm the validity of any proposition.

We understand that what is encountered as a necessity in such discursivities is the necessity of a "return to the beginning." Here too, it is necessary to distinguish these returns from the phenomena of rediscovery and "bringing up to date" which are frequently produced in the sciences. I would give as an example Chomsky who in his book on Cartesian grammar has rediscovered a form of knowledge which runs from Cordonney to Humboldt: it is a question of a retrospective labeling of the historical inquiry. The history of mathematics is rich in this kind of phenomenon (I refer to the study which Michel Serres has devoted to mathematical anamnesis). But, what is meant by the return? I believe that in this way one can designate a movement which has its own specificity and which accurately characterizes the establishment of a discursivity. In order for there to be a return, in effect, it is first necessary for

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there to have been a departure, not an accidental loss, not a confusion through some kind of misunderstanding, but an essential omission. The act of establishing a discourse is such, in effect, that in its own essence even, it can be forgotten. That which makes it known, that which proceeds from it, is, at the same time, that which establishes the variation and violates it. This nonaccidental omission must be surrounded by precise operations which can be located and analyzed by a return to that very act of establishment. The omission is part of the discursivity in question, it is what gives it its law. Further, this return is addressed to what is present in the text; more precisely, one returns to the text itself, to the text in its nakedness, and at the same time one returns to what is marked in the blankness of the text. One returns to a void which the omission concealed or obscured. The reexamination of all of Galileo's texts can certainly change our knowledge of the history of mechanics, but it could never change mechanics itself. On the contrary, reexamining Freud's text modifies psychoanalysis itself, as the reexamination of Marx modifies Marxism. Thus a final category must be added: a kind of enigmatic interplay between the author and the work.

* * *

I regret not being able to conclude more positively, or at least with some suggestions for future analysis.

Such an analysis, if it were developed, would perhaps permit the introduction of a typology of discourses. In effect, such a typology would not be constructed simply on the basis of the grammatical characteristics of discourse, on its formal structures, or even on the basis of its subject matter; without doubt, there exist properties of relations which are properly discursive (irreducible to the rules of grammar or logic, or to the laws of methodology) and it is to these that one must address oneself in order to distinguish the large categories of discourse. The relationship (or the lack of relationship) to the author, and the different forms of this relationship constitute one of these discursive properties. I also believe that one can find here an introduction to the historical analysis of discourses. Perhaps it is time to study discourse not only according to its expressive values, or in its formal transformations, but also according to its modes of existence: the modes of circulation, evaluation, attribution, and appropriation of discourse vary with each culture and are modified within each; the effect on social relationships can be more directly seen, it seems to me, in the interplay of authorship and its modifications, than in the themes or concepts contained in the works.

The author, or what I have tried to describe as the function of authorship, is no doubt a function of the subject. But is it a possible or a necessary one?

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To see the historical modifications which have taken place, it would not seem indispensible for the authorship to remain constant in form or complexity. One can well imagine a culture where discourse can exist without authorship. One would no longer entertain the questions which have been rehashed for so long: Who is really speaking? Is it really he and not someone else? With what authenticity, or with what originality? And what has he expressed? But, other questions like these would arise: What are the modes of existence of this discourse? Where did it come from? How does it circulate? Who can appropriate it? What sites are prepared for possible future subjects? Who can take over the diverse functions of agency? And behind all these questions one would hardly notice the stirring of an indifference: "What difference does it make who is speaking?"

(*Translated from the French by James Venit*)

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GOING TO THE MOVIES

Stephen Koch

THE FATE OF SERIOUSNESS

Ideas have their own parabola of rise and fall. For over a hundred years, first literature, and then film, have been devising formal perspectives on that alienation which is the modernist literary theme par excellence—the diseases and dilemmas of the rootless mass mind, the solipsisms of the uncommitted intellect, the terrors of a social destiny without content, or a private destiny without love. It should be needless to say that the weary world has grown no less alienated as the literary notions envisioning it have slid through their history of invention to convention to cliché to worse. But when the conventions have become, so to speak, part of the alienation problem, sooner or later the relation between an urgent reality and its dying clichés becomes explosive. Credence flatly rebels. To be sure, the clichés may retain some of their lingering cachet as ex-ideas, and of course they are still "true." Most clichés are self-evidently true. But divested of an authentic thought's latent promise of new or renewed perception, they have become truths in which it is impossible to believe. Last spring, with the almost simultaneous release of Michelangelo Antonioni's *The Passenger* and John Schlesinger's *The Day of the Locust*, two major films appeared, trafficking with the dying platitudes of contemporary seriousness in such variously incompetent and cynical ways that each provoked, despite itself, a small crisis of consciousness. One noticed that the very ideas on which they are based have begun to go rotten.

Both films claim to be grand moralized landscapes of the modern spiritual life. Both participate in a major category of the modernist narrative achievement—an art of landscape that includes Nathanael West himself and, as its preeminent touchstone and example, Kafka. In this art, the moralization of a landscape aspires to an almost visionary energy. Both Schlesinger and Antonioni lack that energy to the point of offensiveness, and the reason seems to be that the films' ideas are in an advanced state of intellectual decay. Fairly or unfairly, one cannot rid oneself of the feeling that these movies offend less because they are failures than because they are falsehoods.

The Passenger fails on the most elementary level. I, for one, suspend

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disbelief more easily in a movie theater than anywhere else. How then explain one hour, fifty-odd seat-shifting minutes in the dark, disbelief in a perpetual state of raucous rebellion? *The Passenger* could not more ostentatiously propose itself as a modern parable. To be sure, one does not judge the protagonist of a parable by the standards of realism, but to the degree that *The Passenger* obviously does not—could not—achieve conviction over one scrap of what it claims to be saying, meaningful illusion is repeatedly demolished. The film wobbles madly between the claims of realism and the austerities of a more purely envisioned form, failing in both.

The protagonist of any parable, ancient or modern, is indelible to the landscape in which he moves. His is invariably a *paysage moralisé*. It is easy (though of course pointless) to imagine a fully realistic character outside the immediate situation of the work. One can, without difficulty, feature Pierre Bezukhov, for example, making a trip to London, though he does not do so in *War and Peace*. On the other hand, it is out of the question to imagine the Prodigal Son, or *mutatis mutandis*, Joseph K. anywhere but in the landscapes they animate, because those landscapes have been moralized into an essential condition of the protagonists' imaginative existence. This crucially determines, among other things, the matter of narrative detail: the realist uses detail to particularize his character into "independent life," while the parabalist invariably uses detail to more deeply moralize his character into an emblematic irreality. It would be absurd—it would be comic—to wonder if the Prodigal Son prefers this or that type of wine or women, or if Joseph K. is partial to roast beef. But we are told the Prodigal Son is sent into the fields of "a far country" to feed swine, because the fact universalizes his disgrace as a wayward Jew.

Of course the modernist parable is "universal" only in a very special sense. Among the most impressive achievements of modernist narrative—an achievement in which Antonioni's best work holds an honored place—has been the creation of an entirely new kind of moralized landscape with an entirely new kind of relation to the real. The Prodigal Son is indeed universal man, confronting a universal temptation. Joseph K. is not. The Prodigal's departure and return are a simplified emblem of events, conceived in its simplicity to "cover" with interpreted relevance an infinite number of events in real life. Joseph K.'s transactions in his nightmare landscape serve no such function. For one thing, they are not simple but elaborate, even fancifully elaborate. They acquire their coherence and power from a whimsical but imaginatively unbroken proximity to perfectly real contortions of the spirit (fixated guilt, overwhelming self-loathing, massive depression), which we know in real life are perfectly capable of mashing the personality into the same faceless, poisoned existence suggested on the page. But these states of mind

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differ from the waywardness of the prodigal by having one thing in common: paralysis, immobility. Not action (albeit misguided) but the incapacity to act. Or feel. Or respond. Or love.

Quite obviously, paralysis cannot be narrated in any ordinary sense. But it has been the special function and achievement of the modernist *paysage moralisé* to *narrate immobility*. This is the achievement of Beckett, Kafka, and, in his lesser way, West. The immobility in question is almost invariably understood as a spiritual disease—offhand, I cannot think of exceptions outside comedy, although sometimes, even in Kafka, it is also a mystical metaphor. The artist conceives his fanciful landscape as the only arena where the immobilized spirit can be liberated into (otherwise unthinkable) events and therefore into some kind of (otherwise unthinkable) awareness. The implicit paradoxes become formal principles, and they account for the strange breeziness blowing through the half-light of Kafka's prose, in such contrast to the dreary, fetid, choking fixations of the *Diaries*.

In *The Passenger*, a man named Robertson stands with Jack Nicholson on the terrace of a God-forsaken African hotel, exclaiming on the beauty of the desert beyond. "Something about it seems to be waiting." Nothing could be more characteristic of Antonioni. Watching *L'Avventura*, one does indeed have a wonderfully complicated and delicate sense of waiting through silence in landscapes that are autonomously present, all-but-alive, saturating the wide screen during those long, slow, meditative takes. Even more extraordinarily, those attendant landscapes successfully replace ordinary incident and characterization as a way of making the film live and move. The moralization of Antonioni's great landscapes is all the more powerful because it is a filmmaker who is narrating immobility through the full paradoxes of a moving picture, and doing it, moreover, in a way wholly unaffected by those vestiges of an expressionism which, in the literary forms, must be reluctantly conceded to infect almost the whole genre, even Kafka. Since a moralized landscape is likely to seem dreamlike or nightmarish, the artist is almost irresistibly tempted to resort to expressionism's dreamlike, nightmarish vocabulary, creaking as it is, spooked and gothic, symbol-laden, self-consciously horrifying. (It is no accident, for example, that Schlesinger makes Tod Hackett's paintings an even more dippy and vulgar version of Emil Nolde, with ritual nods, of course, to Goya.) *L'Avventura* is completely free of these hokey encrustations: its landscapes are clean, "real," we see them with our eyes open. (It is only in later films that Antonioni lapses into the expressionist trap, as in the silly dance of the clowns—straight from third-rate Wedekind—in *Blow-Up*, or the long passages using the Open Theater in *Zabriskie Point*.)

"I'm interested in men, not landscapes," comes Nicholson's curmudgeonly reply out on that African terrace. It's a snappy riposte—one wishes

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Antonioni had paid more attention to it. But no. *He* is interested in landscapes. He just can't figure out what to do with the men in them. In *The Passenger*, Antonioni's *paysage moralisé* has simply fallen apart. On the one hand, we get landscapes—very pretty ones. One the other—in a totally disconected, unresonant way—we get moralism, guzzling down its sententiousness like so much gin. The result is—precisely nothing. One simply does not believe anything in this movie. One is told that a disaffected BBC journalist named David Locke, on assignment in Africa, decides on a lonely impulse of despair to switch passports, possessions, and destinies with the busy gunrunner, Robertson, suddenly dead in the wretched hotel room next to his. But not for one moment do we forget that the man up there on the screen is neither Locke, nor Robertson, but a very famous movie actor named Jack Nicholson. After Locke-Robertson-Nicholson begins rushing around Europe, missing appointments in the dead gunrunner's purloined datebook, not once do we believe, on any terms, a single adventure that befalls him, be it an international incident or the discovery of a cute French gamine, who thinks him her heart's desire. We don't even believe Robertson has died. We are aware, every second, that his "body" in the hotel room is an actor holding his breath. The actor, by the way, is very good at holding his breath.

What on earth ever happened to the Antonioni who made *L'Avventura*? That most painful aspect of *The Passenger* is the hysteria one feels running through it, the same hysteria that ran through *Zabriskie Point*, the hysteria of an artist who once made *L'Avventura*, desperately trying to remember "how in *hell* did I do it?" Antonioni reads the magazines, he knows it had something to do with landscapes, narrative disjunction, alienation—so try, try again. I sense—of course I cannot prove it—that the critical community shares some part of the responsibility for Antonioni's current confusions. There is some evidence that Antonioni pays all too serious attention to his critics, who, of course, have worked overtime on him. (For example, Peter Wollens, a film reviewer and author of a book on film and semiotics, is coauthor of *The Passenger*'s literally unspeakable screenplay.) If I am right, Antonioni's recent disasters stand as dreadful testimony to the dangers of an artist believing his critics.

When it appeared, *L'Avventura* was so very stylish that everyone assumed that for that reason it must represent some authentic new departure in cinematic style. In addition, the film's aesthetic tact, the all but ungraspable delicacy of its theme, its cool mastery of strategies that seemed at once baffling and satisfying, led everyone to the conclusion (a typical critic's error if ever there was one) that Antonioni must, therefore, be an artist of ideas. Time has proved both assumptions obviously, embarrassingly wrong. In retrospect, it seems more accurate to say that *L'Avventura*'s achievement was based not on

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an original style, but on an original insight. A style is repeatable. An insight is not. Furthermore, that insight would seem to be almost purely aesthetic, to have almost no discursive content at all. And what was that insight? It is hard to define. But to put the matter a bit crudely, and in the terms of my argument here, Antonioni saw that he could locate his adventure in some unique never-never land somewhere between the world of realism and the world of the parable. The result was a masterstroke, but it seems increasingly evident to be of the kind that can be made only once.

In *The Passenger*, everything that was delicate in *L'Avventura* has become almost comically crude. As Antonioni mercilessly ships Nicholson around Europe from beautiful site to beautiful site, the script thrashes desperately between realism and the parable, hoking up explanatory "realistic details" (not one of which withstands fifteen seconds examination), while concocting ever more portentous ways for Nicholson to attitudinize in situ. And those who have supposed Antonioni to be an artist of ideas here inherit the whirlwind. Our bedeviled hero is obliged to continually strike one posturing intellectual attitude after another, which, taken together, compose a remarkably diverse anthology of contradictory platitudes on the subject of—you guessed it—alienation. Nicholson-Locke-Robertson is in flight from reality. He is in search of reality. He feels nothing. Everything wounds him. He loves, but love is pointless. Love saves, but he cannot love. His life is empty: it lacks political commitment. Politics is empty, a trap. He is paralyzed by introspection. He has no inner life. He is mindlessly active. He cannot act. One begins to sink behind the seat, numb.

The film, meanwhile, degenerates into a cinematic coffee-table book of lovely places to visit. From the desert to a pretty rococo church in Munich, to Gaudi's Palau Guell and the Casa Mila in Barcelona, to an interesting modern church and convent on the southern Spanish coast, one pictures the tourists, Leicas and guidebooks in hand, standing right where Antonioni has placed his camera: "Gee, Alice, wouldn't this be a swell place to shoot a scene from a movie?" Yes, but it must be a real movie. Why does Nicholson haunt these churches? He nowhere evinces any slight religious or architectural preoccupation. But even to ask the question leaves one at once baffled and bored. Throughout, we alternate helplessly between the twin modes of the banal and the arcane. An example of the banality: In the rococo church, it chances that a wedding is in progress when Nicholson makes his incomprehensible entrance. This provides an irresistable occasion for him to muse sadly on his own less than happy marriage, and I blush to remind the reader that the sequence terminates with nothing less than a close up of rose petals from the bride's bouquet, all crushed and trampled on the church floor. The arcane moments, on the other hand, are reserved for Nicholson's female companion in search/

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flight, who, instead of having three names, has none at all. We are told that she is an architecture student. It is a role in which Maria Schneider is assigned some of the most insufferably gnomic dialogue on record: "This place," she grandly intones as her first line, "was built by a man who was run over by a bus." Countless thousands neither know, nor want to know, the purport of The Girl's lines in *The Passenger*. Among this throng must be included the actress who utters them. Schneider plainly does not know. She plainly does not care. Neither does anybody else.

This includes, I presume, Antonioni. It is perhaps a backhanded testament to his integrity that when presenting something he obviously neither sees nor believes, he becomes simply incompetent, hysterical, incapable of putting together a credible "product." Not so John Schlesinger. He does not ever make "incompetent" movies, and his *Day of the Locust* is in every visible way "superior" to *The Passenger*. For example, all the actors' performances in *Day of the Locust* are highly professional (that they are repeatedly overblown is the director's fault), while nobody in *The Passenger*, except Nicholson, ever manages to act their way out of that famous paper bag. And while *The Passenger* can scarcely be said to exist at all as a work, *Day of the Locust* has real power. Power of a peculiarly hateful kind.

Like *The Passenger, Day of the Locust* ostentatiously pretends to inhabit the landscape of modern spiritual disease, and everything that happens in that landscape has a theme. Oppressively, relentlessly, the subject of Schlesinger's film is sexual anguish. The disease here paralyzing the technicolor terrain is murderous horniness in absolute frustration—sexual hysteria, sexual degradation, sexual despair. The despair of *men*, that *is*—for at the center of all this utterly miserable lust, within the panting circle of yearning and bloodshot male eyes, stands Karen Black as Faye Greener. A strange transformation has been worked on Nathanael West's pessimism. It has not only been sexualized, it has been rendered sexually specific and turned into a preeminently masculine form of suffering. Of course there is plenty of sexual frustration in West's book, but in fact his vision is generic and absolute: It is the hysterical bafflement of *every* impulse to fresh feeling or action, and it leaves Faye Greener as baffled as anyone else. In Schlesinger's version, West's despair has become a slavering, brutalized, degraded condition consequent upon being sexual and male. It is men whom frustration humiliates and drives to horrified, hysterical destruction and self-immolation. The Faye Greeners merely muse—emptily, of course—on the carnage they create. One could hardly find a more convincing example of how a profound misogyny necessarily entails a profound misandry.

I was, of course, sent back to the novel after seeing the film. Rather to my surprise, I found myself revaluating the book in the light of the film, and

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revaluating it downward, forced to conclude reluctantly that, junky though it is, Schlesinger's movie is not so complete a betrayal of West as one might hope.

W.H. Auden, in an admiring essay which is the best critical text on West I know (and to which I am much indebted), speaks of the despairing hysteria afflicting almost everyone in West's fiction as something he calls "West's Disease,"—"a disease of consciousness which renders it incapable of converting wishes into desires. A lie is false: What it asserts is not the case. A wish is fantastic: It knows what is the case, but refuses to accept it. All wishes, whatever their apparant content, have the same and unvarying meaning: 'I refuse to be what I am. . . .' " A sufferer from West's Disease, therefore, "cannot desire anything, for the present state of the self is the ground of every desire, and that is precisely what the wisher rejects. Nor can he believe anything, for a wish is not a belief; whatever he wishes, he cannot help knowing he could have wished for something else."

West's own attitude toward this disease, it's worth noticing, is extremely ambivalent. He despises his characters and their paralysis, he thinks them degraded fools, but never half such fools as those who are not afflicted with it. West's despair has, for him, the status of an ultimate truth. And though that truth consists of contemptible, irresolvable misery, its status as truth at least prevents it from being, like any and all other modes of consciousness, beneath contempt, a fatuous delusion unworthy of notice. In each of his books, West's imagined landscapes carry the full conviction of his pessimism, but as he moves toward the greater "realism" of *The Day of the Locust*, he more and more succumbs to an impulse to sociologize that despair. Many people have considered this a step forward—a maturation away from a more callow formalism in his earlier work. I have thought so myself. Now I wonder.

For West, Hollywood was not only a real place, festering with real and enticing corruptions, but since those corruptions were fed on unreality, he also felt perfectly free to appropriate Hollywood as the landscape of his phantasmagoria. I rather suspect West privately believed that everybody (if only they would admit the truth) ought to see their own destiny in Faye Greener's. But West could not say that: his gift was not large enough, too many readers would know that such a vision is simply untrue; West would be incapable of getting them to suspend that disbelief. Auden remarks that West does not understand the difference between pity and compassion. I would add he does not understand the difference between despair and contempt. Understandably enough, he could not live alone with his despair. Unlike Kafka, he seems unable as an artist and moralist to encounter its full isolating power, though that isolation is half its truth. Instead, West constantly seeks to justify and sustain his despair by pointing out to us how we are surrounded by the con-

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temptible riff-raff of an unendurable world. There is something very shoddy in this tactic. The pain is *his*, not that of tourists in California. Fortunately, in Hollywood he had a real landscape which he knew the educated people who comprised his audience felt free to overburden with moral and social significance and then complacently despise. This gave West a free hand: the phantasmagoria would be mistaken as real. To this day, one cannot visit the mecca without people gleefully dishing up this or that incident noticed around town that's "just like Nathanael West . . . "

God knows the vision and diagnosis are penetrating, and certainly one is treated to plenty of Westian moments in Los Angeles. But, in fact, neither Los Angeles nor anyplace else is "just like Nathanael West"—it has become a dull cliché of smart people to say so. West is an exquisite artist: in his hands, credence is enthralled. Nonetheless, his phantasmagoria as sociology is, quite simply, false, and that falsehood undermines him as an artist. I do not for a moment believe the people on either West's or Schlesinger's Hollywood Boulevard—insofar as we consider them as "real"—have "come there to die." I think a good many may be having quite a lively time. Nor do I believe they are all walking around numb and degraded with sexual frustration. I think a "real" Tod Hackett might have liked his work and (horribile dictu!) taken some very lovely tumbles in those big California beds. And though Los Angeles does indeed seem intellectually less than Athenian, it is fatuous and arrogant to suppose that the people there are nothing but a collection of cultureless heartland dopes with their mouths hanging open, incapable of meaningful thought or feeling.

Still, one's objections to West are circumscribed by his artistic precision and integrity. Schlesinger's film, on the other hand, may be the most offensive example yet of what has now become—through relentless vulgarization of visions such as West's—the dominant mode of bogus seriousness afflicting "major" films, theater, and a good deal of literary fiction as well. The trend began in earnest with Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, but it has now spread everywhere—an art which has contempt as its muse and finds gratifications in a servile intellectual flattery. To make the recipe, the artist chooses some group of people—college professors, Hollywoodians, journalists, whatever—toward which the middlebrow audience is known to have ambivalent feelings. Then a sleek, snarling, pretentious work is put together demonstrating what empty, dishonest, depraved, stupefied lives these wretches lead. Then the dish is served: "Behold the contemptible fools who have troubled you. You have nothing to fear from *them*—and how wise, how penetrating of you to see through their facades. How wise, how penetrating of me to show it all to you."

It is a repellant fact that this craven flattery and cynical exploitation of

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the audience's worst (and least intelligent) instincts has become the debased destiny of certain clichés which once (as in West) may have been living and even exciting perspectives on experience—always (naturally) in the name of intelligence, intelligence.

Schlesinger's film has undeniable power. Its cynical appeal is first subtly, then relentlessly, then sensationally made. It is disturbing—I and several people I know had insomnia after seeing it. But it is also (and this is no paradox) boring. Schlesinger cannot honestly make his dead landscape live: he never comes close to finding a cinematic equivalent for West's laconic precision, that plain style of his which renders everything at once familiar and irreal. Instead, Schlesinger is obliged to gorge his film on his own anything-but-plain style, calling on every imaginable, gorgeous horror of overstated cinematic manipulation again, and again, and again. One leaves at once bored and pummelled. And insulted. Actually, the film is self-betraying in its sado-masochistic method. Desperate to flatter its audience, the film wears a servile smile which repeatedly loses its control and slackens into a repulsive leer of contempt.

From Isaiah to Vergil to Dante to Milton, the pre-eminent *paysage moralisé* of the Western imagination is the landscape of the damned, the depiction of Hell. West understood that his hysterical despair required a metaphor for The Judgment, even though his sociologized apocalypse is infinitely less interesting than Kafka's response to the same necessity. Like Kafka, he needed an end. But Kafka was an artist of the fragment: West could not forgo a *dies irae*, even though he knew that his particular damnation consisted in the fact that the purge of judgment would and could never come. Meditating on the frozen pictorial immobility of a landscape where nothing real can ever happen, West's Los Angeles begins to burn before the fire, and the tableau of a child doing a song and dance routine is rimmed in a cool, unconsuming flame.

Taking his cue, Schlesinger sets out, in his horrifying final riot sequence in front of Grauman's Chinese Theater, to give us nothing less than a depiction of Hell. No expense is spared. No hideous vision left unseen. No pretentious allusion left untouched. Blood spatters and drools most realistically out of murdered children's mouths. Limbs are ripped, bodies are crushed, walls are toppled, flames rise before us. There is lots and lots of weeping and gnashing of teeth. In his essay, Auden speaks of West's work as about "a kingdom of Hell whose ruler is not so much the Father of Lies as the Father of Wishes." Let me speak bluntly. I submit that Schlesinger's version of *Day of the Locust*, unlike its model, belongs solidly in the camp of the Father of Lies. And I don't believe one damn minute of the movie.

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BOOKS

FROM VIETNAM TO WATERGATE

THE SEVENTEENTH DEGREE. By Mary McCarthy. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. $7.95.

THE MASK OF STATE: WATERGATE PORTRAITS. By Mary McCarthy. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. $6.95.

It is spring. I am writing this review of Mary McCarthy's books on Vietnam and Watergate while I listen to an extraordinary pianist, Alexis Weissenberg, play Bach. The fugue which Weissenberg plays reminds me of Sartre's discussion on Bach. He says that Bach does not cause him to think of the austerity of Liepzig or the Puritan stolidity of the German princes. It seems that music touches the soul, the principles of morality which we insist are there within us and which we must seek to discover. Politics deals with momentary and seemingly transitional concerns. But art is unique and unrepeatable in each "creative act and remains fixed, enduring through the real historical process. . . . Politics and art are two ways of overcoming time, but the victory of politics over time is transitory" (Sanchez Vazquez).

Not only is it spring, but today is very special to me. It is my forty-first birthday and incredibly, it is the day that the war in Indo-China has formally ended. I pick up Mary McCarthy's book, *The Seventeenth Degree*, and there she is posing with a grinning Bernard Fall in front of a helicopter or two. I wrote the *Viet Nam Reader* with Fall. That spring of 1967 he was going to take me around Indo-China. Instead, he was killed. He was forty-one. So many memories come back to me reading McCarthy's passionate accounts of the moment. It was a time which showed us in our fantasy and forcefulness. The war seemed to be the culmination and the contradiction of our beliefs. The only music which touched us was music of the moment. It was music of protest and marches, just as the literature which seemed to matter the most was the analysis and reportage of the moment. Newspapers and weekly magazines became our daily prayer. Whether in music or literature the structure was rudimentary. It reminded me of a figured bass to which the marcher and the chorus of young supporters could easily spin a variation on the basic tune of

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the young. "Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh. The NFL's gonna win." Embarrassed middle-class protesters had no such certitude. We felt a greater sense of futility about our actions. But even in our futility we kept hoping our quixotic actions might "click," might start an avalanche which would end the war, or imperialism, or at least the next day's bombings. I do not think that anyone in the resistance and protest movements felt that the movement would fail.

I remember walking home one evening with Arthur Waskow in 1967. It seemed time to move from middle-class protest to resistance and we did. Six months later I was on trial. My family stayed at the home of the Roman Jakobsens, through their kindness and the kindness of Noam Chomsky. Six years before that, in 1962, I was in the White House, but so far from it. Sandy Jencks was then an editor of *The New Republic*, who with Gar Alperovitz talked with me about capturing *The New Republic* for a special issue on Vietnam which would tell the Crazies to get out. Jencks put out that issue. Thirteen years later, $160 billion in treasure and millions in lives, the Crazies were forced out by the American people, by the impassioned intellectuals like McCarthy, and by the soldiers who gave up fighting rather than be used as pawns for imperialism. (The Crazies could not leave without signing their name in blood with the Mayaguez incident and other postwar bombings. Their predecessors in imperialism had also left their signature in Hanoi in 1950 and in China in 1949. The Americans bombed and blew up bridges, buildings, and airfields.)

Like many intellectuals during the Indo-China war, McCarthy lived in one world and felt in another. She lived in the elite world that believed American leadership had taken leave of its senses in Vietnam. Elites pride themselves on prudence: prudence is a major ingredient for anyone who aspires to success as an imperialist. McCarthy's passions led her to understand that the Indo-China war was more than a question of prudence. Her moral sensibility also led her to Vietnam where she experienced the anguish of societies in war. She was not there as an adventurer or as a journalist. She was there as a committed person who happened to write. Her visit to Vietnam led her to believe that the American system itself was decaying. Most people in McCarthy's world did not deeply question the values of the political and economic system. One reason was that the intellectuals rode a crest of success in the sixties and they saw the United States as having reached great heights of consumer-goods prosperity.

Mary McCarthy, so far as I know, was not a victim of twentieth century American imperialism. Indeed, it could be argued that her personal success was related to the success of American imperialism. It gave her the freedom and the access to come and go as she pleased. She was welcome, as she points out, at the best tables. But this fact makes it all the more interesting that she, and others like her, drew on their moral outrage, beyond class, to seek the war's end. Because McCarthy was not content with the drawing rooms of

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Paris, she traveled to Vietnam. She went like the European journalist who had already taken sides. McCarthy felt that the rage and commitment could only be expressed from the concrete situation. She manifested the lapsed Catholic's doubt about extrinsic principles of right and wrong. For her, situations of "rightness" and "wrongness" had to be experienced: Then her rage could be justified. McCarthy's insights are most powerful when she talks about a situation in its totality and then describes its consequences. I was less struck with her description of the people in the situation since she suffers a bit from cosmopolitan unkindness which assumes that those hooked by the roles and deceptions of the everyday world are yahoos and fools. Yet when she moves beyond description and judgmentalism, she brings great acuity to the subject matter and the situation. She understood the moral weakness of Lieutenant Calley and, by reference, the military's absurd view of conscience. Calley had said at his trial that his remorse was "for losing my men in the mine field, remorse that those men ever had to go to Vietnam, remorse for being in that sort of situation where you are completely helpless." As McCarthy says, Calley "felt regret for things that were not his fault." During the period of the war the Johnson administration would accost the antiwar movement with political demands that it criticize the Vietnamese and the NLF for their atrocities if it continued to criticize the American military policies. Johnson's advisors were saying that the American antiwar protesters had as little control over the American government as they had over the NLF. As it turned out, they were wrong. In part they were wrong because the quality of cynicism, which is so infectious among Americans who expect immediate payoff from any exertion, was held to a minimum. It is true that there was much pessimism. What difference do the marches make, or the leaflets, or draft resistance, or filling the jails? But they make a difference. McCarthy points out that if the cynic is right 99 percent of the time, it does not matter when it comes to political action. She recounts the experience of Ron Ridenhour, who refused to let the My Lai massacre pass into the ocean of blood which the war created. Ridenhour was "naive enough to send thirty letters, nine registered, to President Nixon, senators and congressmen." And in his naiveté he obtained the investigation of the massacre. McCarthy inveighs, correctly, against cynical wisdom, a knowledge of pessimism and immobilization. And while she is taken with the late Chip Bohlen, a pompous, cold warrior, in ways that Halberstam was taken with the Bundys and McNamaras ("The best qualities of old-fashioned American representatives abroad were being exhibited in 'Chip' Bohlen's gay and efficient helpfulness"), she was not overwhelmed by the ruling elites.

Part of McCarthy's new understanding came from her trip to Hanoi where the Westerner is taught the limits of his own culture and technology. McCarthy learned two lessons that provoked her into a reconsideration of her life. Perhaps borrowing from her early Catholicism she saw the importance of

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the potentiality of conversion. The Vietnamese accepted the principle of human change, so important to the ideas of progress and revolution. "Unlike Western liberals, they do not accept difference, but they accept change axiomatically as a revolutionary possibility in human conduct—which Western liberals do not; that is why liberals have to be tolerant of difference, resigned to it."

But Americans also believe in conversion. Westmoreland used to talk about the missionary spirit which drove the Americans forward in Indo-China. The restless, unquenchable need of Americans is to find converts or customers. Perhaps both. Unfortunately, American conversion does not include hope for a better future unless one is prepared to wipe out the past. But the more important lesson that McCarthy learned turned out to be profoundly dislocating to her because it seemed to make light of her bourgeois life. She came to Hanoi basking in her relative financial freedom and "the freedom to write exactly what I wished." In the atmosphere of Hanoi this freedom, and her overstuffed suitcases, turned out to be faintly irrelevant. Mistakenly, in my view, she ended up questioning her freedom to write what she wanted when it had no effect. "A free press is livelier than a government-controlled one, but access to information that does not lead to action may actually be unhealthy, like any persistent frustration, for a body politic." If her freedom was empty, she wondered whether her subjectivity existed, her I-ness. Was there a Mary McCarthy who was something more than a bundle of roles and obligations, pretensions and illusions which she picked up in her life from others? Was she living a lived life? "Nothing will be the same again, if only because of the awful self-recognitions."

Ms. McCarthy's reportage and analysis is less successful in *The Mask of State: Watergate Portraits*. Six of the chapters of this book were written for the *London Observer* and two for *The New York Review of Books*. The moderate socialist, Mary McCarthy, dedicated the book to a constitutional conservative, Sam Ervin. It deals with the characters of Watergate, especially as they appeared to her during the Senate Watergate hearings. The articles suffer from a somewhat impatient quality as if McCarthy knows the truth about these men and their situation. She approaches them like an angry citizen who wants to ride them out of town on a rail. Yet what is missing from the book is why it happened. She does not relate Watergate to the Indo-China war, or to the problem of executive fiat, or to the problem of international corporations which see politics and crime as indistinguishable.

She does not spell out the state behind the mask. Nor does she tell us what the Nixon clique had in mind, what their moves and "plays" were in trying to get hold of the bureaucracy and wrest power from an establishment which Nixon said in 1972 had lost the will to rule. In other words, McCarthy's Watergate portraits do not describe the cracks in the wall of state on which these hapless, banal men were hung.

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What is the difference, for example, between the liberal Robert McNamara and the conservative John Mitchell? We now know that the destructive and terrifying secret-police agencies which operated abroad also operated at home under liberal, more constitutionally minded Presidents. But these are questions which McCarthy knows from the Indo-China experience. Why were they not dealt with in her newspaper accounts? Walter Benjamin has said that the newspaper's content is material which refuses any form of organization other than that imposed by the reader's impatience. But the intellectual's role is not to be impatient, even though his or her attention turns to politics, a transient subject matter. The task is to inform and interpret, suggest and prod, to describe the fundamental questions under the transient ones. The ex-Catholic, but I suspect deeply religious, McCarthy says that she is concerned "about the problem of purgation and atonement." She wonders how leadership can redeem itself and the country. It is this theme which she should have dealt with in her book at great length. It is understandable that newspapers or weekly journals, corrupted by impatience, would not have found the requisite number of lines necessary to allow a discussion of this elemental question.

MARCUS RASKIN

CAFÉ CRITICISM

THE PAINTED WORD. By Tom Wolfe. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. $5.95.

"It's kind of a goof." That is what Linda Lovelace said to every question a journalist put to her about starring in the first-run pornography of *Deep Throat*. And that, in essence, is how Tom Wolfe responded in a recent interview about his latest book, *The Painted Word*. The interviewer had supposed that the book's flamboyant attack on modern art—its makers, its critics, its patrons—issued from some sort of position on the part of its author. If Mr. Wolfe thought modern art empty, what kind of art did he support in its

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stead? If he thought the criticism misdirected, what kind of writing would serve its subject better? If he thought those institutions corrupt, what should replace them? "I don't *care*, frankly," was Wolfe's consistent reply. "I don't care if the situation never changes. Because if it changes, it might not be as funny. I've had a good time writing about it." In short, it's kind of a goof.

The Painted Word hit the art world like a really bad, MSG-headache-producing, Chinese lunch. It hit it at a time when—after a decade of activity during which work of consistently focused ambition and high quality was produced—a sense of diffuseness and transition pervades the art world. But transition is not the same as decline. So those readers of Wolfe's book who have any serious interest in the state of modern painting and sculpture did not think it such a goof; they tended, instead, to think it something of an affront.

The thesis of *The Painted Word* is that modern art, long ago emptied of any intrinsic content, functions solely as a medium of social exchange. Through its purely honorific value, the work is able to add a specialized luster to the cultural lives of the rich, in exchange for which they are willing to lionize its makers. In order for this exchange to take place, Wolfe's argument continues, someone has to create a value for these meaningless objects of trade. This is where the critics come in. Part middlemen, part shamans, they are the ones who validate these fetishes by endowing them with a meaning they would never otherwise attain. In order to concoct this meaning, the critics invent special brews of aesthetic theory that are as elaborate as they are obscure.

The Painted Word sets itself the task of "exposing" this arcanum of theory, and for this endeavor its author considers the best technique to be ridicule. So, for example, Wolfe decides to make sport of the notion of "flatness," a concept he identifies as the theoretical property of Clement Greenberg. He begins by quoting from an essay on the work of Jackson Pollock in which Greenberg, postulating that the general concern of modernist art is to reveal, rather than conceal, its material means, states that one of the ways painting can do this is by declaring its own flatness, and describes Pollock's work in those terms. To these statements by Greenberg, Wolfe then adds his own set of interlineal riffs: *"That thick, fuliginous flatness got me in its spell,"* he starts to jeer. *"That constructed, re-created flatness that you weave so well . . . ; Those famous paintflings on that picture plane,"* Wolfe finishes, counting on the comic exposé to mock both art and theory out of existence.

But when the laughter subsides, there is left, for some people, an image. It is an image of one of Pollock's great canvases from the late 1940s, the Metropolitan Museum's *Autumn Rhythm* perhaps; and those people are remembering a particular experience they had in relation to that work. That

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experience would have been one of enormous sensuous immediacy in which there was also an appeal to thought. For they would have seen a certain kind of transformation of the physical substances (pigment, canvas) that form a painting, which occurred without ever having denied those substances. They would have seen a materially self-evident web of paint generate a very special sense of luminous depth. It was special in that it did not belong to any particular known space, like a landscape; and it had no chartable dimensions. Instead it was space seen abstractly as the property of paintings (the way colors or textures are the properties of objects), rather than as their illustrated content. Since space or depth is the opposite of flatness, it is paradoxical that depth should be seen as a property of the flat surface of Pollock's paintings. But the energy of Pollock's work was generated by that paradox. The luminous flatness of *Autumn Rhythm* was space turned into an abstract idea which could shape the material givens of a work and its contents into a single, continuous, object of perception. What those people are remembering, then, is a particular moment of intuition which is sometimes called an aesthetic experience, and which Wolfe renders in his text, with a sputter of italics and fancy punctuation, as "*. . . it. . . .*"

For those people, the ones who have had that kind of immediate experience in relation to works of modernist art, who have felt grateful for and convinced by its affirmation of the seriousness of a certain kind of human enterprise, who have been affected by the forms it has found to embody the moods and modes of consciousness, Wolfe's thesis remains consistently beside the point because Wolfe is charging in *The Painted Word* that they have not had that experience—that "*it.*" According to him, there really isn't any experience to be had. But there are many people who have responded to modern works of art, and for them that fact is completely beyond argument.

The point that it is beyond argument needs to be emphasized. Because whatever knowledge one might want to see as being established by that primary experience—and different writers about art have obviously had different conceptions of the directions a critical response might take—critical response begins and ends in the authenticity of that experience.

By implying that with respect to modern art, specifically modern abstract art, there isn't any experience, Wolfe creates the inference that those who make it and those who respond to it are simply shamming; and in order to cover up this deceit they have either constructed or become dependent upon a barrage of words known as critical theory. In relation to the elaborate con they are pulling, this critical theory functions as an emotionally feeble but politically powerful substitute for the experience that isn't there. Further, their motives for engaging in this game range from self-aggrandizement and self-flattery, through the basest kind of venality and economic self-promotion to a

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witless credulity and self-deception. Through the flash and filigree of Wolfe's orchestration of this theme, one hears the throb of that *basso ostinato* by which he repeats: there isn't any experience; there isn't any experience.

Now, if one is looking at the kind of social and economic fallout that surrounds the making of high art in our culture (and some of it is very noxious indeed) but one is looking at it from the vantage of having experienced the seriousness of that art, the situation becomes a little more complicated than Wolfe wants to allow. It becomes, one might want to say, morally complex. But if what informs one's perspective is the absence of any experience of that work, then the moral issues begin to shift ground.

From the position from which Wolfe writes, a position informed by his own professed lack of aesthetic experience of this work, there is no central intuitive response for which one has to take any particular responsibility and, therefore, no brake on what one might say. Wolfe feels free to describe the art in just about any way he chooses. Pop art, we are told, was a realistic style all along and held out the pre-cubist pleasures of narrative painting, a point one finds quite baffling in a text illustrated with Jasper John's deadpan *American Flag* and Roy Lichtenstein's *Yellow and Blue Brushstrokes*, neither of which function narratively. Larry Poons's painting can be likened to the optical illusions from "Ripley's 'Believe It or Not' "; Frank Stella's work can be described as frames hung on the wall with nothing in the middle; and minimalist sculpture can be characterized as room dividers.

That is how art gets treated; the vulgar cannibalizing Wolfe performs on the body of art criticism is done with even greater insouciance. Given his contention that there is no experience, it is possible for him to describe the men and women who write about modernist art as a monolithic cult, performing the ritual of self-promoting obscurantism out of uniformly contemptible motives. It is possible for Wolfe to ignore, in the case of the three critics he parodies at greatest length, the fact that Harold Rosenberg, Clement Greenberg, and Leo Steinberg are men whose response to works of art have led them to conceive of the project of writing about those responses in ways that are entirely diverse. Rosenberg, who works in an area between art criticism and social history, uses the possibility of an authentic experience of art as a model for authenticity in general, and has been consistently attentive to the dangers of alienation from experience. Greenberg, with an entirely different focus, has engaged in a long and patient labor to build a normative criticism based on a language of description in which what one says about a work is completely verifiable within the manifest features of the object itself. And Steinberg has wished to codify what might be called a psychology of response: a written enactment of the process of careful and sustained attention to works of art. But if these three critical tasks are different, their motivating energies are not.

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In all three cases there is a primary sense of responsibility to the truth of intuitive experience.

If I keep returning to the question of truth or authenticity, it is because that is both the real subject and object of *The Painted Word*. Tom Wolfe has looked around the art world without having been able to detect a single flicker of it; and if we are to trust his account, that is because his book purports to be the very model of what is missing in the world he observes. Wolfe's language, with its insinuating tone, its confessional hysteria, its performance of immediacy, the fake spontaneity of its asides, is held up to us as the genuine article: feelings at a pitch of intensity, the ego continually triumphing over the threat of alienation.

But as is the case with most of the new journalism, what we are confronted with in *The Painted Word* is the totally theatricalized self. In attempting to present us with a subjective account of the event, the writer has simply substituted himself for the event. He has given us the theater of his own rage at being excluded from that event, which is in this case the work of art.

Yet it is natural to works of art that they exclude the interventionist ego. For like most of the things we take seriously, they are independent entities with meanings of their own to which we must attend. And if Wolfe asks, "*Why* must one attend to them? On pain of *what?*" then the only answer one can give is this: on pain of not getting *"it."*

The function of criticism is simply to aid the process of that response, suggesting ways of looking and things to look for. It cannot invent something that is not there. But it can describe the vision of experience for which the choices displayed by a particular work are both enactments and emblems.

If there is any real charge that can be leveled at the art criticism of the past few years, it is not that it has conjured up something from nothing, but that it has not responded fully enough to the richness of its subject. Contrary to Wolfe's argument, we are faced at this moment with a poverty rather than a surfeit of criticism with any fresh theoretical energy. The sensibility and the sets of ideas out of which the sculpture of the 1960s was made has never adequately been described. Because this sculpture has generated much of what is being done at the present time, the absence of a coherent body of theory by which to clarify its choices has made the art of the 1970s seem much more fractured and inchoate than it actually is. We are therefore in a situation where current art has moved, temporarily, beyond the reach of a critical language relevant to its terms. It is into that situation that Wolfe has inserted *The Painted Word*, a book that has troubled certain critics, not because (as it contends) they have done too much but because, of late, they have done too little.

ROSALIND KRAUSS

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FACES OF MARX

KARL MARX: HIS LIFE AND THOUGHT. By David McLellan. Harper & Row. $7.95.

GRUNDRISSE. By Karl Marx. Translated with a foreword by Martin Nicolaus. Random House. $15.00 ($3.95 p.b.).

The trouble with McLellan's book is that, apart from a few misprints, there is nothing negative to say about it. This is an excellent book in many respects: learned yet very readable, comprehensive yet not too long, clear yet not simplified. It should be one of the standard biographies of Marx for years to come. But the subtitle, *His Life and Thought*, should not lead one to expect a detailed discussion of Marx's philosophical and political theories. The author pretends neither to give a full account of the doctrine nor to chart its vicissitudes through the ninety years following Marx's death. However, Mr. McLellan does give succinct and clear accounts of all Marx's major works, weaving them into the life history.

Among those who in recent years made serious contributions to our historical understanding of Marx are three categories of writers: those who are sympathetic yet critical of their subject (for example, Lichtheim, Fetscher, Rubel, Avineri, Bottomore, Harrington); those strongly critical, sometimes even hostile (for example, Wolfe, Jordan, Tucker, Kamenka, Plamenatz); and some, though not many, orthodoxists of one kind or another (one might quote Mandel's rich and illuminating study of the formation of Marx's economic thought and, not without some reservations, Vranicki's history of Marxism). McLellan obviously belongs to the first category. He is an admirer of Marx—not necessarily an easy task for a biographer, who, committed to examining the man as well as his work, is bound to study the weaknesses of his hero: the outbursts of bad temper, the disloyal polemics, the story of the illegitimate child which Marx's maidservant bore him. But though it contains abundant details of Marx's familial life, McLellan's book is not a psychological portrait; it is an intellectual and political biography. On every point it adheres to facts and sources, and it never strays into literary essay, psychoanalytical inquest, accusation, or eulogy.

McLellan is undoubtedly one of the most competent Marxologists today. That he achieved this at so young an age can be at least partially credited to his exclusive concentration on the subject. All the books he has written to date

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deal with Marx. One of them is his selection of the *Grundrisse* published in 1971. Since then, the complete English translation, by Martin Nicolaus, of this text has appeared in a Penguin edition and it takes only a modest prophetic gift to foresee a number of learned books and articles in English devoted to the *Grundrisse* in the next few years. In fact, it appears that the *Grundrisse* is becoming a progressively more fashionable text, and not necessarily because these writings reveal a surprisingly new face of Marxism. Apart from the Introduction, which is really a very important work of Marx (and the most comprehensive exposition of his method in social science), but one well-known for seventy years, the *Grundrisse* does not compel us to repaint Marx's intellectual portrait. The first edition, in 1939-1940, was virtually unknown; the second one, in 1953, took many years to become a common source for those interested in the history of Marxism (the French translation appeared in 1967-1968). In fact, from 1844 onwards, Marx wrote and rewrote one and the same book, different variants of which we may now compare and of which the *Grundrisse*, as McLellan convincingly argues, are the most comprehensive. McLellan shows that the three volumes of *Das Kapital* are but a fraction of the plan conceived by Marx in the late fifties, and that the *Grundrisse* has to be considered as the only existing rough sketch of the whole. This fact alone, of course, establishes their importance; many subjects that Marx did not get to in *Das Kapital* are mentioned or discussed here (landed property, wages, precapitalist formations, foreign trade). Still, his thinking on many of these subjects was known from other sources, and it would be an exaggeration to say that a new, previously unknown Marx is revealed in this text. What is really important about the *Grundrisse* (again, apart from the Introduction) is, first, the insights we gain into the working of Marx's mind and, second, the fact that this text appears to be the definitive link between his philosophical anthropology of the early forties and *Das Kapital*, and so shows the continuity of his thought. The view of Marx struggling with himself to find the perfect foundation of his ideas deserves attention even if we know the more concise and more precise form they take in *Das Kapital*. And it is worth seeing how the anthropological concept of alienation takes another form in the Marxian theory of value that is formulated in his criticism of Proudhon and Ricardo.

In fact, the significance of the *Grundrisse*, both as a close view of Marx's mind at work and as a bridge from his half-Feuerbachian humanism to his economic doctrines, is especially striking in its treatment of the question Marx himself considered to be the core of his system: the theory of value and surplus value.

Certainly, the idea that the Marxian labor theory of value is simply another variant of the concept of alienation he took over from Bauer, Hess, and Feuerbach at the very start of his intellectual peregrinations sounds

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blasphemous to most Marxist fundamentalists. They believe that Marx discovered a unique, unfailing method of analysis which enabled him to grasp scientifically the essence of economic processes hidden beneath the surface of phenomena, and that he proved what that value really is. This is the view shared by the translator of *Grundrisse*, Martin Nicolaus. His long foreword provides us with a clear and instructive account of the historical origins of Marx's work, a less than clear attempt to show the relevance of Hegelian logic to Marxian method, and a number of remarks on the extraordinary efficiency of this method in explaining and predicting social processes, an efficiency which is particularly evident in the case of the theory of value. The same foreword contains an encomium of Lenin and Mao (both eminent philosophers in the author's opinion), and exhorts us to go to China and Vietnam in order to see the emergence of the new man of Communism as predicted by Marx. These pieces of harmless piety can be put aside. The author presents a more or less standard Marxist tenet in the law of value ruling the capitalist economy. Neither he nor, to my knowledge, any of the followers of this standard version have tried to explain how the following two statements made by Marx can square with each other: 1) It is a tautology to say that labor is the only source of exchange value; 2) That labor is the only source of exchange value should be considered a law explaining basic features of the capitalist economy. It is not clear, to say the least, how a tautology could be at the same time a law governing real social processes. (I mean, of course, the definition stating what the value really is—not the obviously true statement that changes in the productivity of labor usually result in changes in prices, such a statement being neither specifically Marxist nor logically dependent on the labor theory of value.)

It would be silly, however, to try to discuss here the question which has been the subject of unremitting argument for the last hundred years. A brief remark may be added insofar as the question is relevant to the special position of the *Grundrisse* in Marx's intellectual development.

The labor theory of value, that is, the general statement that the real value of a commodity is determined by the effective or average labor time used in producing it, was employed for centuries as a conceptual instrument intended to cope with various theoretical and practical problems: What do all commodities have in common that makes them basically exchangeable? What is the "just price" of commodities, that is, how to define the equivalent exchange? How can the economic growth of a country be measured irrespective of fluctuations of prices? How can price fluctuations be explained?

Marx's labor theory of value differs from the version he inherited from classical economics in at least four important points. First, Marx explicitly stated that labor is not only the measure but also the only source of exchange

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value. Second, he added to the distinction between use- and exchange-value, the distinction between abstract and concrete labor. Third, he hit upon the idea that workers were selling not their labor but their labor power to employers. Fourth, he wanted to prove that the very phenomenon of exchange value was historical and transitory, and that we should anticipate a society which would do away with it entirely (and, consequently, eliminate money). All these changes could not transform the labor theory of value into an explanatory theory of prices. However, this was not their real purpose. Their contribution lay in the description of the phenomenon of exploitation as residing not simply in the failure of workers to get the full value of what they had produced (since they could not get it, as Marx admitted and as common sense suggested, even in the most perfect Communist society), but in that the workers' human qualities, expended in the labor process, were taken from them in the form of abstract exchange value which is subjected to its own anonymous laws on the market. What mattered was the fact that producers were unable to control their products which, as carriers of the exchange value, turned against them in the form of quasi-natural catastrophic powers. And the description of this phenomenon is nothing else but an extension and specification of the theory of alienation developed by Marx in the early forties and inherited from old young Hegelians. The reading of the *Grundrisse* is perfectly convincing on this point. If we conceive of the theory of value as a scientific explanation of the phenomenon of exchange, its epistemological status will appear fairly similar to that of the Phlogiston theory in seventeenth-century chemistry: a search for a substance or a principle which is supposed to explain a number of empirical phenomena but is known only as something that manifests itself in these phenomena and lacks any explanatory or predictive force. The same theory may be understood, on the other hand, as a philosophical attempt to identify and to reveal a very significant side of social life: the domination of real individuals by socially produced abstractions. Not unlike other global constructions in the philosophy of history, such a theory is irrefutable, unprovable, and nonpredictive, and, consequently, it cannot be conceived of as a part of science in the historically shaped meaning of this term unless, as some Marxists do, we depart from this meaning and produce another concept of science, purposely designed to present the work of Marx as the science par excellence. Yet there are no reasons, except for arbitrary decisions of rigorously empiricist philosophers, to consider nonscientific constructions, particularly in the philosophy of history, meaningless or devoid of cultural worth. There is nothing scandalous or regrettable in our desire to grasp the "global" meaning of the world, incapable though we are of doing this with conceptual instruments that are scientifically reliable.

I do realize that, while not alone, I am in an insignificant minority in

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holding such a view. Therefore, I will present a summary of other solutions to the same problem of Marxist theory. I offer five of the main versions.

First version: psychoanalytical (the author is an East European Jew, anti-Communist, practicing psychoanalysis in Los Angeles):

Marx's theory of alienation, his theory of value, and his Communism are all to be explained by his anti-Semitism resulting, in its turn, from his hatred of his father. Marx hated his father; that the documents seem to prove the opposite can mislead only shallow minds (in fact, each man hates his father and if he thinks he loves him this proves that he hates him; and his love is merely an attempt, under the pressure of his superego, to thrust out this feeling of hatred from the conscious level, and to assuage his sense of guilt by an exaggerated love). Marx's father was a Jewish convert and, in his son's eyes, the symbol of Jewishness. Now, Marx identified Jewishness with money (several quotations available), and he considered money to be the extreme form of the alienation of labor. As a result of this equation (father = Jewishness = money = alienation) his hatred of the father took the shape of an anti-Semitic theory holding that alienation is the source of all social evil and demanding a Communist society, which means a society where alienation (that is, money, that is, Jews, that is, father) is destroyed. Consequently, the anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union, far from being a denial of Marxist legacy, is its perfect fulfillment. QED.

Second version: structuralist (the author is an American Jew, vaguely sympathizing with Chinese Communism, teaching general semiotics in New York City):

We have two different structures in Marxism. One of them corresponds, naively speaking, to the young Marx, the other to the old one (in fact, to use words like young or old is to make allowances for the general public's ignorance; scientifically speaking, Marx's theory cannot be explained by his life; on the contrary, his life should be inferred from the structure of the theory). Historical relations of these two structures are scientifically irrelevant as the science is about structures, not about origin, and that is that. Let us call them conventionally the structure of alienation (concept A) and the structure of value (concept B). Here are structural definitions:

Concept A: a field of tension generated by the shift of a minimum social unit from the pole of immobile identity toward the pole of self-propelling forward-facing identity along the periphery of the obliquely directed non-identity.

Concept B: centripetally directed unified repository of the multiformly applied energy in pseudo-self-stabilizing translocation on the growth-vector in discontinuous time-rhythmicity. (Diagrams with many arrows available for both definitions.)

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If you think you do not quite get the meaning of these definitions, do not worry and do not feel depressed, just keep repeating them as often as possible and never, never let other people suspect that, if they mean anything, they mean exactly what was meant in previous and simple definitions. QED.

Third version: Marxist-Leninist, Western variant (the author is a young German assistant professor, teaching sociology in West Berlin):

The real scientific problem is: Was Marx a Marxist-Leninist? The answer is yes. The next question is: When did he become Marxist-Leninist? The correct scientific solution is that when Marx was employing the concept of alienation he was just a petty-bourgeois democrat (progressive in this historical period, yet inconsistent), because alienation is essentially an incorrect, unscientific, bourgeois concept based on the idea of human being in general. But, scientifically, there is no human being in general, only capitalists and proletarians. Later on, Marx overcame his petty-bourgeois concepts and came to the correct theory of value. This correct theory correctly and scientifically proves that capitalism will be overthrown by revolution and that we will take power. And so, Marx correctly and scientifically became a Marxist-Leninist reaching the scientific level of Enver Hoxha and Walter Ulbricht. QED.

Fourth version: Marxist-Leninist, Soviet variant (the author represents and expresses the thought of 200 million Soviet people enthusiastically devoted to Marxism-Leninism and their leaders):

The imperialist-Trotskyist-liberal-fascist-Maoist-monarchist-revisionist-chauvinist-cosmopolite liars and renegades try to deny that Marxism-Leninism is the invincible weapon of toiling masses. In vain, because the Marxist-Leninist science proves that the Marxist-Leninist science is the invincible weapon of toiling masses. As comrade N. (change when appropriate) said: "Marxism-Leninism is the invincible weapon of toiling masses." QED.

Fifth version: French-dialectical-existentialist-Marxist (the author is a French ex-Communist, now critical and humanist, but allowing nobody to be further to the Left than he is):

This version, unfortunately, can be properly expressed only in French and it says: "L'être humain, tout en s'affirmant dans sa negativité, se nie dans cette affirmation. Par conséquent, en n'étant pas, dynamiquement, ce qu'il est, il est, statiquement, ce qu'il n'est pas. Il s'ensuit qu'en s'arrachant de sa positivité, déjà en état de l'autonegation, il n'achève la totalité qu'à travers la forme detotalisante. Et c'est l'aliénation. Et la valeur? C'est l'approfondissement de cette non-totalité en mouvement de la negativité totalisante. Et c'est la révolution, oui, c'est la révolution! (A clumsy translation: "The human being, while he affirms himself in his very negativity, denies himself in this affirmation. Consequently, while dynamically he is not

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what he is, statically he is what he is not. This means that when he breaks out of his positivity which is already in the state of self-negation, he reaches the totality only through the de-totalizing form. And this is alienation. And the value? It is a deepening of this non-totality which is the movement of total-*izing negativity. And this is the revolution, yes, this is the revolution!*) QED.

Each of these versions has merits of its own. The first is very ingenious, the second very scientific, the third and fourth very revolutionary, and the fifth very profound. My version has none of these merits, alas.

LESZEK KOLAKOWSKI

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WRITERS' CHOICE

EDITORS' NOTE: Writers' Choice *is a new department of short comments on old as well as new books that our contributors like particularly and want to call attention to.*

LEONARD KRIEGEL: Nothing can be more dreary or more stultifying to the creative spirit than much of what generally passes for Marxist literary criticism. A brilliant exception is the late Ernst Fischer's *Kunst und Koexistenz*, which was published in 1969 in this country as *Art Against Ideology* (trans. Anna Bostock, Braziller). As literary criticism, it is incisive and stimulating; as an example of Marxist humanism, it is both moving and hopeful. I cannot understand the neglect the book has received in this country, especially when I compare it to something like Christopher Caudwell's *Romance and Realism*, which in our own time has somehow achieved the reputation of a classic Marxist critical statement. Fischer's first chapter, in which he compares Beckett's *Endgame* to Solzhenitsyn's *Ivan Denisovich*, is a masterful analysis of two works which deal with "the negation of . . . [man's] dignity." And *Art Against Ideology* succeeds, among other things, in defining just how and why literature is important in an age when thought, like life, magnifies chaos.

George Orwell's *Essays* (Harvest) have certainly not been neglected. But each time I reread them, I find myself envious of Orwell's ability to define issues and focus on the real question at hand. Compare his essay on Ghandi to Ericson's book-length study. For Ericson, Ghandi is a saint; for Orwell, he is first and foremost a rather unattractive man who functioned with verve and intelligence against English imperialism. Orwell inevitably tends to see men as relatively small, a rather healthy antidote to contemporary hagiography. And I can think of few English essayists whom we ourselves might benefit more from studying. The man actually writes sentences—lucid, cogent, simple.

ROSALIND KRAUSS: Seeing the film *India Song* by Marguerite Duras has led me into the network of the novels, plays, and scenarios she has written over the last decade, particularly *The Ravishing of Lol Stein*, *The Vice-Consel*, *La Femme du Gange*, and the dramatic text for *India Song* itself. The obsessional reworking of a small inventory of narrative fragments produces in each successive text the effect of a voice remembering. This quality of

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memory becomes progressively depersonalized, and assumes the form of contact with a cultural code, which signifies what Roland Barthes has called "the already written." Duras produces an intensely emotional relationship to the dawning recognition of this code, which is simply there to be reexperienced and to be acknowledged as the foundations of experience itself. On reading these texts one is gripped by the procedures of Duras and the kind of abstractness towards which they lead.

The Image of the People and *The Absolute Bourgeois*, both by T.J. Clark (New York Graphic Society). Insofar as recent developments in contemporary art are forcing a reexamination of the conceptual basis of realism, T.J. Clark's new work has a powerful importance for me as a critic. His two volumes on the decisive moment in the formation of Nineteenth Century French Realism—*The Image of the People* and *The Absolute Bourgeois*—come as an impressive expansion of art-historical method, at the same time as they are extraordinarily enlightening about the careers of Courbet, Daumier, and Millet. More light is thrown, on the questions raised by this period, by Walter Benjamin's brilliant studies of Second Empire Paris, which have recently been translated and issued as *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* (London: NLB).

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LETTERS

POINT COUNTERPOINT

PR:

Neil Schmitz's essay on Pynchon has many provocative moments. But its conclusion provokes my outraged disbelief. Either the essay is a practical joke, in very bad taste, or it announces a proto-fascist response to the one writer of our time whose sympathies are most with the preterite, the anonymous, the wasted ones.

Mr. Schmitz's exaltation of Blicero as a malicious hero, "the evil father whose malice is our only hope of heroism," is bad enough, especially when deliberately counterpoised to Slothrop's "mediocre" fate. His sense that Pynchon tries to "reinvent the value of evil" in a world threatened by "the blankness of peace" is worse. To praise *Gravity's Rainbow* for its "ethic of the desperado, not the ethic of the survivor," to celebrate Pynchon's "anarchic criminality," reveals more of Mr. Schmitz's values than of the book's, if my own sympathetic responses to Enzian, Roger Mexico, Pokler, even Katje and Byron the Bulb, are any indication.

But when he says that the book is really an allegory of the Bourgeois vs. the Heroic, that what Pynchon most "loathes" is "the continuity of the obscene in history," that at least Blicero and Pointsman, though demonic, are *men*, not Oedipa Maas's ineffectual knights, "self-effacing, suicidal, men with muted horns," then his reading becomes worse than misreading. It's no accident, I think, that Mr. Schmitz concludes with a scornful, gratuitous reference to how the "petit-bourgeois" have transformed Pynchon into their own image by giving him the National Book Award with Isaac Bashevis Singer. For Mr. Schmitz, to associate Pynchon with a Jewish celebrant of ordinary folk is clearly contaminating.

There are many moments in his essay, especially where he talks about theories of history, that I admire. But on this particular "appeal," he has to be called to account.

David Leverenz,
New Brunswick, New Jersey

Mr. Schmitz replies:

. . . I do not praise or celebrate Pynchon's tortured representation of Blicero in *Gravity's Rainbow*, nor do I suggest that Pynchon regards Pointsman as anything but a power-crazed, dangerous system-maker. Indeed he appears generically in *The Crying of Lot 49*: "where were Secretaries James and Foster and Senator Joseph, those dear daft numina who'd mothered over Oedipa's so temperate youth? In another world. Along another pattern of track, another string of decisions taken, switches closed, the faceless pointsmen who'd thrown them now all

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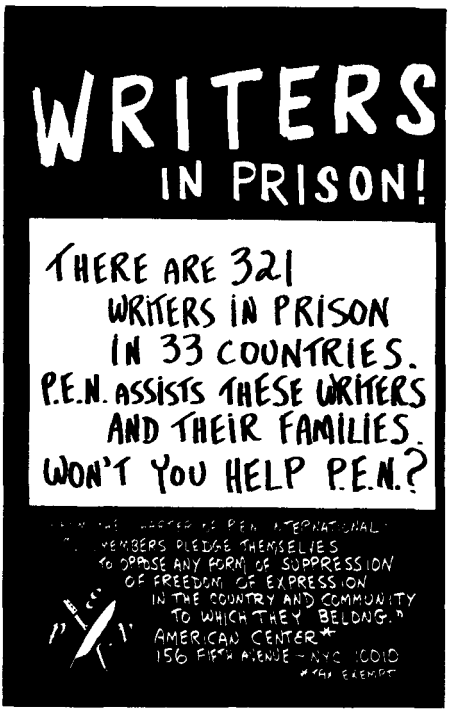
transferred . . . . Among them they had managed to turn the young Oedipa into a rare creature indeed, unfit perhaps for marches and sit-ins, but just a whiz at pursuing strange words in Jacobean texts." It is Dullesian peace, the peace Nixon promised to structure, the peace of the pointsmen, that makes Oedipa the nervous and frustrated interpreter she is in *Lot 49*. In a sense, she is Slothrop's issue, a child of the fifties fashioned in the forties who wakes up in the sixties. And so the gyres turn in Pynchon's fiction. What *is* one to make of Blicero? Where does he fit along the scale of Leverenz's sympathetic responses?

As for the accusations liberally strewn throughout Leverenz's letter, they are just so much *chepuhàh*. *Gravity's Rainbow* provokes outraged disbelief, not my essay.



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